PlayStation®2

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK

WORLD EXCLUSIVE! GRAN TURISMO 3 PLAYABLE DEMO!

WELCOME TO LONDON

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH SONY'S
GANGLAND SHOOT-OUT, **THE GETAWAY**

» INSIDE
STAR WARS: STARFIGHTER –
HANDS-ON REPORT
ONI MODEL COMPETITION
THE COIN-OPS HEADING FOR
YOUR PS2
**GAMING GOES GLOBAL WITH
G-SURFERS**
FINAL FANTASY X – FIRST PICS
INSIDE MTV MUSIC GENERATOR
THE DEATH OF DREAMCAST

20+ PAGES OF REVIEWS
KNOCKOUT KINGS 2001/SHADOW OF MEMORIES/ONI
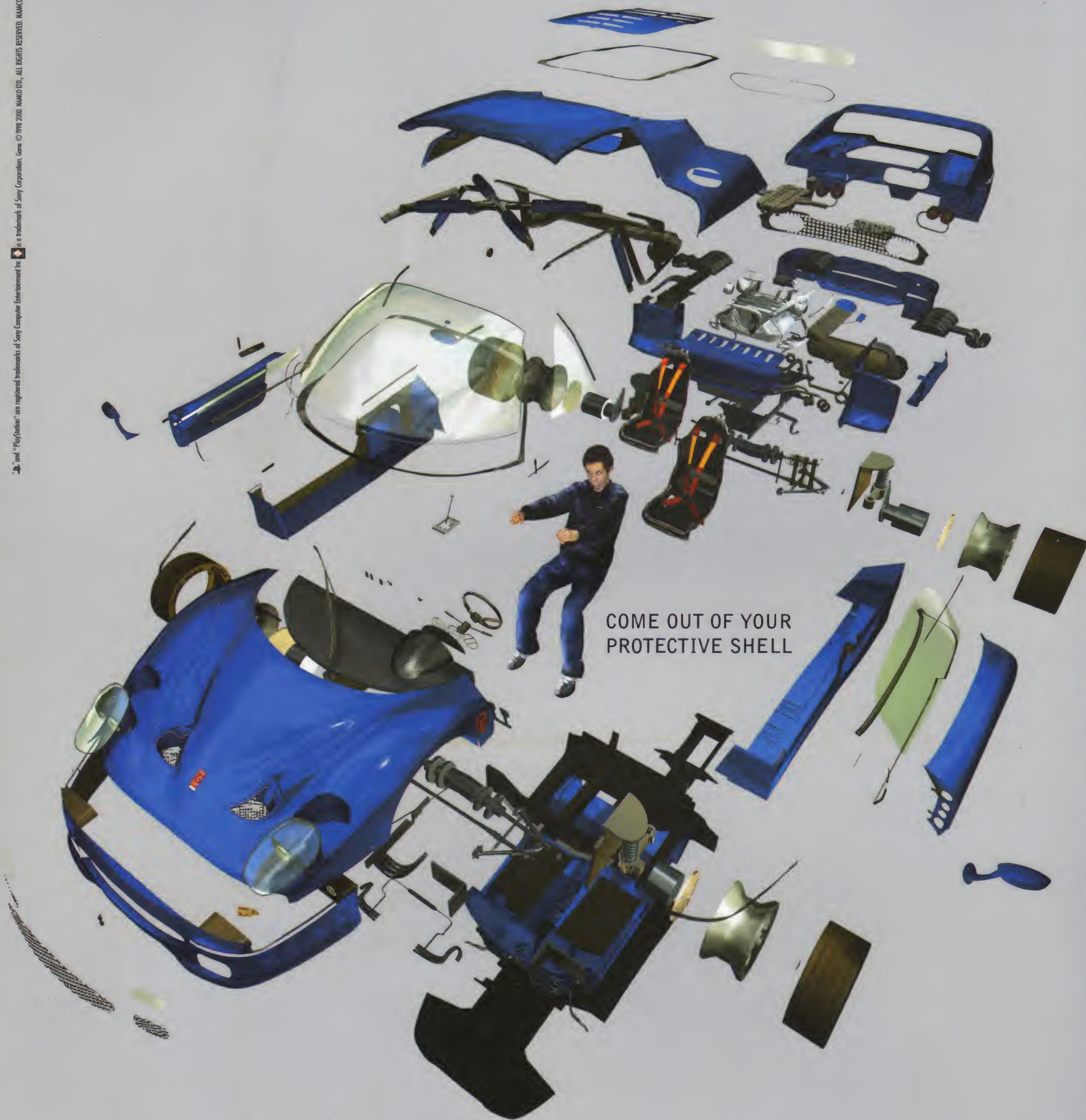7 BLADES/ETERNAL RING/WDL: THUNDER TANKS/MORE

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PlayStation®2
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK

ISSUE 005/MARCH 2001

GAME REVIEWS

PlayStation 2
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FULLY PLAYABLE
GRAN TURISMO 3: A-SPEC
WORLD EXCLUSIVE! TWO-TRACK
DEMO OF THE WORLD'S
GREATEST RACER!

ROLLING DEMOS
SKY ODYSSEY/MADDEN NFL 2001
F1 CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON 2000
THEME PARK WORLD
KNOCKOUT KINGS 2001

SONY / future

ON THE DISC
WORLD EXCLUSIVE *GT3: A-SPEC* PLAYABLE DEMO
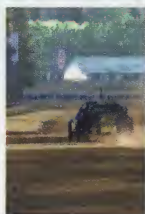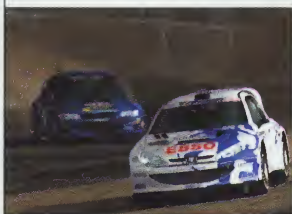
PLAYABLE DEMO 1/GRAN TURISMO 3: A-SPEC
Over three months before UK release, try out three cars
and two tracks in our world exclusive demo.

PLUS/ROLLING DEMOS OF:
*Sky Odyssey, Madden NFL,
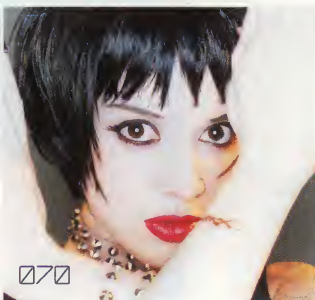F1 Championship Season 2000,
Theme Park World* and *Knockout
Kings 2001*

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EDITOR'S LETTER
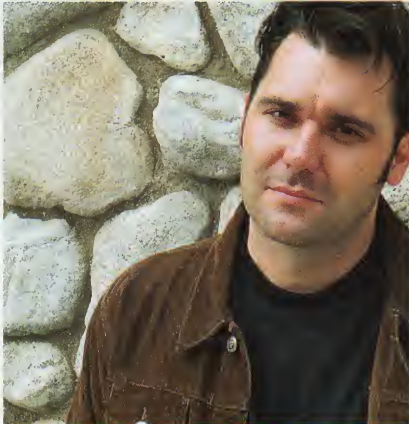
Sonically speaking

As predicted in last issue's stop press news, Sega has confirmed that they are to halt production of the Dreamcast and bring their games to once-rival consoles. Without wanting to delve into the industry speak, it's a wise move for Sega and one that points a way to a bright future (see page 49). The arrival of *Virtua Fighter* will mean that Namco's *Tekken* team will be forced to considerably up their game while PS2 will finally be blessed with what we can only described as 'typically Sega' games – something Sony's consoles have admittedly lacked.

While other magazines have followed the traditional pattern of console bashing, *OPS2* has always recognised the quality of Sega's titles and this announcement means that PS2 gamers will have the best of all worlds. Console-exclusive games have simply meant gamers were forced to buy multiple consoles. Now we can buy just the one. The fact that PlayStation 2 is the winner is the icing on the cake – we're just chuffed that we can cut down on our purchasing of four-way plugs and keep the amount of consoles under the office TV to a minimum.

Regular readers of Spy will know this is just the latest in a steady move to PS2. Games that have started on the PC are now flocking to PS2, middleware such as NetZ will allow PS2 owners to play PC users in the same online game, while Square sees the future of *Final Fantasy* as a purely virtual world that you can log into no matter what console you own or indeed what country you live in (see page 47). Yes, there'll always be games that you'll need a specific console for but if you'll allow us a small bit of gloating, it's PlayStation 2 owners who currently look to be getting the best deal. Early gripes at the lack of PS2 launch software can now be parried with the arrival of such delights as *Crazy Taxi* and *Half-Life* while the games exclusive to PS2 include the likes of this issue's visionary cover star *The Getaway* and, as you probably know by now, the jaw-dropping *Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec*, which graces our cover disc a full three months before its UK release.

Whether you're looking forward to a PSone conversion of Sonic *The Hedgehog* or salivating at the prospect of a PS2 *Quake III*, the future now looks even better than ever for PS2 owners – whoever makes the games. As a wise man once said, 'You pays your money, you takes your choice'.

It looks like we've all made the right one.

MIKE GOLDSMITH
Senior Editor

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OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK

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CONTRIBUTORS | #05
Helping *Official PS2* brave the unknown void of 2001 are...

MARC BURDEN

Our snapper for the month is Marc, a man heavily into body modification. After an excursion to the body piercing studios Marc left with a huge rod of steel wedged through his shnoz. One time his nose stud fell out and in a state of booze induced anaesthesia he attempted to re-insert it in various places of his face. He now has five nostrils. If he's not tampering with his flesh or taking pictures for us then Marc can be found lounging in a bath of Radox shaving his legs. He says it's because he's a professional cyclist, but that doesn't explain the Dolly Parton wigs and lipstick does it Marc?

Game Of The Moment: "Roma vs Liverpool." Obviously completely unaware that we were in fact talking about videogames, an easy mistake to make in a PS2 magazine.

I'm holding my breath for: "I just like holding my breath," says Marc. Which leaves us a bit stuck for something else to say. Right. We'll be off then.

STE CURRAN

Japanophile and regular contributor Ste ("Not Stephen," as he likes to point out red-faced and waving his fists in the air) is mates with Minnie Driver, Hollywood starlet with the cuboid cranium. Often seen dining together Ste and Box Head both share a fondness for old arcade games, so much so in fact that they can often be seen stealing them from the nation's youth clubs. Whilst recently trying to squeeze an arcade cabinet in his front door, Ste realised the unit was too big, so saw in hand he set about hacking it to pieces. He now has a large pile of expensive fire wood sat in his living room.

Game Of The Moment: *Rhyme Rider Kerorikan* on the WonderSwan Color. "I live in the future now," says Ste. "It's tiny, luckily." But of course.

I'm holding my breath for: "Akira's debut album on Fierce Panda and any kind of *PaRappa* or *Um Jammer Lammy* merchandise I can possibly acquire."

LEE HALL

The best way to describe our PSone expert is a cross between Eric Morecambe and a Pepperami. Besides bringing you the latest news about the PS2's wee brother, Lee has numerous 'alternative' hobbies. If he's not streaking, or fantasising over women in *Holby City* (corpses too apparently) he can be found hollering at his favourite team the Magpies. Lee pretends to be a cheeky working class Geordie, when in fact he was educated at a single-sex private school which explains a hell of a lot – apart from an embarrassing 'trouser soiling' incident that he's fond of boasting about. But we won't go there.

Game Of The Moment: "*ISS Pro Evolution 2* on the PSone is simply stunning. It's the only game in the genre that rewards you for thinking as if you were out on the pitch."

I'm holding my breath for: "I am already dreaming about snapping necks and stuffing corpses into lockers in *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons Of Liberty*."

NICK MOYLE

In charge of the crayons, Moyler, our Art Editor sits in the corner most of the day chewing on the end of a burst felt-tip and making strange West Country grunts at his monitor. When he's not eating erasers, Moyler likes nothing better than standing in the freezing rain watching his favourite football team, Nottingham Forest. Fool. The Forest Law action figure on his desk (re-named Nottingham Forest Law) has even taken on talismanic properties for his team. "He surrenders a limb every time the Tricky Trees lose this season," explains Moyler. "He's currently down to a head, a shoulder and two thighs."

Game Of The Moment: "Whatever footie game we happen to be playing in the office. I can just about last a half before my old broken thumb injury gives me gyp.

I'm holding my breath for: "Voice recognition games – thumb injury excuse to be replaced with 'doesn't recognise my wurzel accent' excuse."

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PC CD-ROM   PlayStation 2
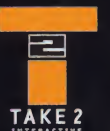
>>ON THE DISC
PLAYABLE DEMO

Time Limit 134sec.

Total 1'41"50
Lap 1 0'15"60
Lap 2 -'--.'--
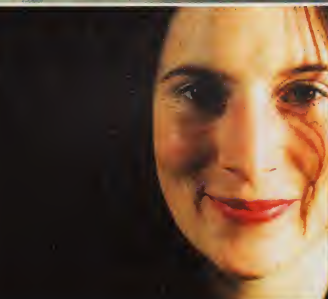
What a month! To make up for the disappointment some of you may have felt last month we've gone and nabbed a world exclusive playable demo of the much anticipated *Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec*. Bomb around two very different tyre burning courses in three top sports cars. I promise you, it'll take your breath away and plays like a dream even at this stage!

To accompany the exclusive playable demo we've got rolling demos of some of the hottest games heading your way. *Sky Odyssey* is one to look out for with reports coming in from America that it's one of the best PS2 games to date. Then we've got a sport's fest for you consisting of great games such as *Knockout Kings 2001, F1 Championship Season 2000* and *Madden NFL* and a further appetite whetting peek at *Theme Park World*. Enough to keep anyone satisfied I'm sure. So, until next month... enjoy!

Catherine Channon
Disc Editor

PS To use this disc insert it into your PS2. Then scroll between games and rolling demos with the ↓ and ↑ keys. To choose within a section use ← and →. Press ⊗ to start your choice up. Please note, you may have to reset the PS2 after some demos.

I PLAYABLE DEMO

GRAN TURISMO 3: A-SPEC
Publisher: SCEE/Game type: Driving sim/Demo type: Playable/Out: Now/Players: 1 (Full game 1-2 or 6 with i-Link)

THE GAME
The most eagerly anticipated racing game ever conceived, *GT3: A-Spec* is the third in the series of undisputed excellence. Boasting over 15 tracks from across the globe and a total of 150 highly detailed cars, *GT3: A-Spec* is the pinnacle of this unrivalled series. So much more than *Gran Turismo 2.5* Kazunori Yamauchi originally wanted his creation known as, the game takes us from the baking heat of the dusty Laguna Seca Raceway to the rain whipped metropolis of Tokyo. Never before has such a game had so many people yearning for its arrival and never before has the game been accessible for the public to get to grips with. Well now it's here and it's time for you to see the wonder of *GT3: A-Spec* for yourself.

Disclaimer
The *GT3* team wishes you to understand that the code which is included on this demo disc is work in progress, and far from the final version. The full game will feature extensive graphical and gameplay enhancements not currently represented in this code.

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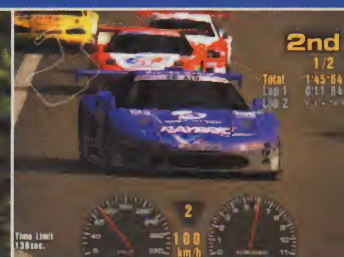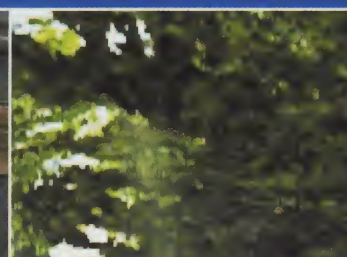
»The controls
D-pad or analogue Steering
Ⓧ Accelerate
Ⓑ Brake
Ⓞ Handbrake
Ⓐ Reverse
Ⓛ Rear view
Ⓛ Toggle view (third- to first-person)

»During replay
↑↓ Toggle between cars
Ⓧ Toggle to first-person view of chosen car's replay

Total 1'14"980
Lap 1 1'14"980
Lap 2 -'--"---

Time Limit 75sec.

3
153 km/h

3rd
1/2
Total 1·41·587
Lap 1 0·19·740
Lap 2
3
145
km/h

6th
1/2
Total 1·56·
Lap 1 0·25·70
Lap 2
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5th
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Lap 1 051·640
Lap 2
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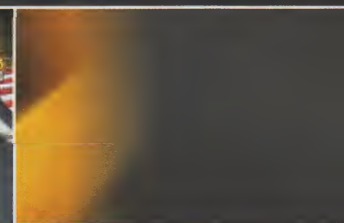
THE DEMO

From the moment the montage of exquisite vehicles and rolling demo fades you are introduced to your choice of three, sleek cars available for a test drive. The growling, yellow monster of the Nissan Pennzoil Nismo GT-R '99, the angular platinum grace of the Pagani Zonda C12 and the RUF CTR2. The RUF CTR 2 has 12 different colour options which can be scrolled through by pressing up and down on the D-pad when if you opt for this car.

After selecting a car, chose either of the two very different tracks on offer. The Laguna Seca Raceway, with its setting sun glinting off your bodywork and undulating, parched track punctuated with devious twists and dips couldn't be further departed from Trial Mountain with its cool, vertical rock faces, occasional tunnels and dappled mid-afternoon sunshine pouring in from high tree canopies. Just you wait.

You are given 150 seconds to get as far around the tracks as possible (we managed to complete about one and a half laps in this time) then you can watch and direct your own replays in full. By pressing up and down on the D-pad, you can switch from car to car. By pressing Ⓧ the camera angle for that car then changes accordingly to first-person. To go for another spin, you will need to reset your PS2. Each and every blistering, dirt churning, move for each and every highly desirable vehicle can be relived over and over in this world exclusive, immensely impressive beast of a game. It has to be played to be believed.

Time Limit 119sec.

| ROLLING DEMO ONE

| ROLLING DEMO TWO

SKY ODYSSEY

Publisher: SCEE/Game type: Fun flight sim
Demo type: Rolling/Out: Summer 2001/Players: 1

BANISH ALL THOUGHTS of salivating geeks flying at 35,000 feet in their carpet slippers on a straining PC. *Sky Odyssey*'s innovative arcade flyer is as far removed from the starched and unforgiving aeronautics of the average flight sim as you could wish for. The game combines *Driver*-esque mission variety with realistic handling, plus a groaning hanger full of actual and imaginary flying machines for you to tame. There'll be barbecues and hosepipe bans by the time *Sky Odyssey* gets clearance to land, but for now, you can hunt out your leather goggles and take a look at our rolling demo.

F1 CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON 2000

Publisher: EA Sports/Game type: Formula One racer
Demo type: Rolling/Out: Now/Players: 1-4 (22 in Time Trial)

STRAP YOURSELF IN and get ready to witness a swarm of the fastest race cars on the planet. Screeching along the shimmering Tarmac of Monaco as exclusive yachts sit in dock, the F1 monsters slither towards you, roaring and whining as they weave through each other. Edited together to produce an assaulting montage of clips, you are treated to close-up, hair-raising views as the cars roar past, camera mounted chicanes that see a river of metal pouring in a torrent past you and near misses that defy belief. If it's a taste of seat of your pants action you desire then look no further than *F1 Championship 2000*.

THEME PARK WORLD

Publisher: EA/Game type: God/business sim/Demo type: Rolling/Out: Now/Players: 1

WE BEGIN OUR tour of our virtual theme park by screeching down a roller coaster that, should it exist in reality, would have the ability to rip your head from your neck. Then it's off for a stroll through the gaudy, multicoloured wonderment of your ideal park where you can mingle with entertainers and snotty-nosed children in vomit stained shirts. Now that you've had time to recover we retake our seats on the roller coaster, then get wet on a virtual log-flume for the closing stages of the demo before retiring to an over priced fast food joint selling mashed cow spine in a bun. If you're after a job creating the thrills and spills of Alton Towers then look no further. *Theme Park World* is a psychedelic, highly dangerous substitute but as the demo proves, it's one worth investing in.

MADDEN NFL 2001
Publisher: EA Sports/Game type: American football
Demo type: Rolling/Out: Now/Players: 1-4

A MEDLEY OF all things violent is the crux of this fast-paced thumping demo featuring very large men crashing to the ground in a heap of twisted limbs and girly shoulder pads, all in pursuit of a misshapen ball. Yes, American football. Touchdowns aren't short on the ground either, and you'll witness players sliding across the line, knocking each other over the head and leaping around in a dazzling lust for glory. Accompanied by a thumping soundtrack this blast of NFL madness comes at you from every angle, leaving you totally breathless and itching to get involved. Best sports game on PS2? Damn straight.

KNOCKOUT KINGS 2001
Publisher: EA Sports/Game type: American football
Demo type: Rolling/Out: Now/Players: 1-4

ALTHOUGH HE RETIRED from the sport many years ago, Muhammad Ali is resurrected to fight alongside other boxing greats. Replays capture jaw-smashing action and brain bruising blows from the world's top fighters and in this demo every multi-million pound wallop to the brain is gloriously showcased. Uppercuts, low blows and hooks all make crunching contact on their unfortunate victim and you can revel in the brutality. Slow motion makes each smash across the head that much sweeter and makes the glorification of violence for money appear as something worth taking a peek at. And it is.

postal

Your replies, requests, responses and rants...

CONSOLE YOURSELF

Congratulations on a great format for the new magazine. It's nice to see a new approach to videogames. I am a great believer of the PlayStation and recently got my hands on the new PS2 and armed myself with what appear to be the two best games available. I also have a very respectable collection on PSone Including my favourite, the *Final Fantasy* series.

Recently, I have heard rumours that Microsoft is planning to buy out Squaresoft to develop exclusively for their impressive new Xbox console. Knowing the extent of the money at Microsoft's fingertips, I am worried this may come true and that it may even happen to other developers that have traditionally worked alongside SCE. I have also heard that Oddworld Inhabitants is moving all its next gen projects to Xbox. Is this true?

My instinct tells me it's a possibility as after looking at the specs for both consoles, in terms of graphical capabilities and speed, Bill Gates' machine comes out on top. However if you look at the N64, that was a better machine than PSone, but in terms of games? Not close enough. If Microsoft do land the developers, PS2 is looking at a hard future.
Alex Langfield, via email

Some fair points, Alex – some of which you answer yourself. The N64 and the Dreamcast were both technically superior consoles to Sony's, but this Christmas saw the five-year-old PSone outselling both 'superior' consoles by nine and four to one. Why? The quality and range of games. It's why people still play Mario Kart on their SNES, why people make arcade emulators for the Mac/PC and why my PS2 was used to play Vib Ribbon last weekend rather than a PS2-specific title.

As for publishers buying developers or signing them to exclusives – it does happen. The PS2 has exclusive titles (see Editor's Letter) as will the Xbox, and only a fool would deny that PS2 owners won't cast an envious eye at Xbox titles – and vice versa. Of course, we have yet to see how these games will play given the Xbox is still over a year away.

For the most part though, basic economics mean publishers will bring their games to all consoles with cross-console compatibility being the next step – again, see this issue's Editor's Letter, the Sega announcement or the oft-mooted compatibility between arcade and PS2 versions of the same game thanks to Namco's PS2-compatible System 246. Don't worry, Alex – they can have Abe, we'll have all the titles talked about over the last five issues. Oh, and as for Squaresoft? The company currently raking it in with conversions of ancient SNES Final Fantasy titles for Japan's current portable fad, the WonderSwan Color? I wouldn't worry about it.

BROADLY SPEAKING

I have concerns about the broadband add-on coming to PS2. Like a lot of people, I access the Net via an 0800 ISP (Internet Service Provider – Tech Ed) so I don't have to pay for my Net time. Will I be able to use this with PS2? I think not. The PS2, as far as I am aware, will use an Ethernet connector, which means I will have to get a socket installed in my house. The thing is, I'm worried about the cost. Many people will have to get a connector installed, which will be £70 upwards. After that, there will probably be a monthly charge for the service. In the UK, we struggle for free dial-up. How much is lightning fast broadband going to cost?

The fact is, the market for PS2 is around 14-30-year-olds. Anyone under 18 will probably not have the money, and neither will students. The latter might also be living in rented accommodation, where they can't have an Ethernet line installed.

I think the UK is not ready for broadband. The reason? BT. The solution? A world without BT. But then again, we may catch another glimpse of the famous Sony magic at work in the summer. Who knows? I hope we do.
Robin Haswell, Little Ribston, Leeds

As we've said in the past, broadband is still a way off and indeed, it won't be an essential update – the PS2 is plug-and-play and its core appeal will stay that way. Broadband will be used for the distribution of content – most of which could also be installed in the forthcoming

Hard Disk Drive by downloading from disc, DVD or Memory Card. There's also the issue that most people don't require broadband, simply wishing to use their PS2 to browse the internet. A standard USB modem will do that job and expect these to be released over the summer.

MATTERS OF GREAT IMPORT

There's one thing that constantly confuses me, and has done since the launch of the PSone back in 1995 – why do we get games last? I know that a few titles are out here first but other than that, we're months behind our American and Japanese counterparts – some games never even make it, such as *Parasite Eve*.

I can understand that a Japanese-developed titles need translating, but what is to stop SCEE, for example, working alongside a Japanese developer, translating a game as it is developed. Or what's to stop them working with the American developers to rid us of these black borders we're forever cursed with. It has been six years – you'd think someone in the know would've cracked it by now.

We are advised not to buy imports but the sole reason that people over here buys them is because they want to play the game. The only way of overcoming this import problem is by dual release – releasing a game in the UK at the same time as the US. In the DVD market people are fed up of getting overcharged for a film that comes out months after the US release and with less features, and so buy US DVDs.
Stu Neale, via email

You have got a point, Stu – and SCEE is more than aware of it. Things are getting better – SCEA's PSone Spyro titles have hit the UK before the US amongst others, while there's also the matter that US PS2 owners are probably writing to their magazines about why PS2 versions of Colin McRae, Tomb Raider and Driver will all take too long to cross the Atlantic. Similarly, a lot of Japanese games are now developed with a English-speaking dialogue and Japanese subtitles – Capcom's forthcoming Devil May Cry being one example. According to our SCEE spokesman, "What you normally find is that games developed in the UK are released here first. Take the upcoming PS2 versions of WipEout, Formula 1 and World Rally Championship 2001. All of these titles will be released in the UK at the same time as the rest of Europe/the world. There is more than just translation

issues that stops the title being available for release in all countries at the same time. There's also the conversion from PAL to NTSC to consider as well as the added QA time to make sure the conversion is bug free". It's getting there, Stu.

WHO NEEDS FRIENDS?

I'm writing about the email from Derek Matthews that you published in *issues four* HardCore Q&A. Being one of the individuals whom Derek classed as 'friends' In his email, I thought I would reply in the defence of each of us.

In fact the reason Derek's PS2 wouldn't work as a DVD player is because he adjusted the laser believing he could play PSone 'backup' games. He asked if it was possible to correct his mistake, so we said no assurances. The warranty seal was already broken and, being trained technicians, we inspected his pride and joy. Due to a lack of electronics data regarding lens calibration, we had no luck. I hope this clears things up as the email from Derek didn't really tell the full story...
Neil Martin, Bucks

A harsh lesson learned, readers. Tamper ye not with the electrical brain that throbs at the core of your PS2 or ye will have the mick taken out of you by those who ye once called 'friends' who will then shop thee to The Man sharpish. Oh, and you'll knacker your £300 warranty just because you wanted to play a dodgy gold disc of some Army Men nonsense.

SQUEAL LIKE A ~~PIG~~ TYRE

I, like others, wait impatiently for the beast called that is *Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec*. I know it is going to be the nearest to a perfect driving game ever seen – for the moment anyway.

I have watched your demo of GT3 at least 30 times and it looks absolutely sublime – but for one thing. Every different car at any speed – even driving in a straight line – has some very unreal tyre screeching which doesn't match the movement of the car at all. Listen to the cars in *Colin McRae 2.0* on Tarmac and this is more 'realistic'.

Even at 90% complete, I'd hope this would have been noticed and changed. If these cars have been recorded live, they certainly don't sound it, and all the speedos look the same. I didn't want to find fault with *GT3* but this is strikingly obvious. Anyway, good things come to those who wait – so roll on.
Phil Gerrard, inverness

You're a hard man to please, Phil, but to be admired for your insistence of PS2 perfection. You're a little way off with your guestimate of "90%" as maker Polyphony has again delayed the title until June for further fine tuning. Have a spin on this issue's world exclusive demo, consider that this version was made back in January and then read Polyphony's disclaimer that, "The full game will feature extensive graphical and gameplay enhancements not currently represented in this code." Good God, what are we going to get in a few months' time? "Hopefully better tyre sounds and speedos," says Phil – and too right, sir.

RETRO! RETRO! RETRO!
Looking through issue three, in your 'List' section you said you didn't want a sequel to Pong on the PlayStation 2. You also said you didn't want any updates of other retro games either. Well maybe, but remember that Pong is no ordinary retro game. It's actually the most extraordinary game ever. This is the game that introduced videogaming to the world.

When it was first released in 1972, Pong caused a sensation that sparked off brands like Nintendo and Sega. And then, in 1995, when Sony realised what it was missing out on, it launched PSone. Without Pong, PS2 and all the other next-gen consoles might not have come until a lot later. Pong is actually not a bad game either, considering it's nearly 30-years- old. It surpasses all the other retro games (Tetris, Missile Command) by miles and also some modern games. An obvious replacement for Pong in 'List' would have been Army Men, one of the worst action adventures ever.
Jamie, Leicestershire

Some people on the mag adore retro titles, some don't but I think just about all of us agree that retro remakes are on the whole bilge – see the PSone 'updates' of Missile Command, Space Invaders and indeed Pong. Like these games? Then play the originals on an emulator, visit a car-boot sale for the real deal or buy the cheap PSone version for your PS2. Just DON'T buy a remake. And while we reserve our opinion on Army Men until it turns up on PS2, you've got a point the size of Alaska.

WE'LL SEE YOU IN COURT
As a previous PSone owner and now a PS2 owner, I'm very pleased with the mag on the whole. I've been a gamer since I

can remember and my first games machine was a Spectrum in 1982. Since then I have bought a Atari ST, MegaDrive, SNES, PSone, N64, Dreamcast, several PC's and now a PS2. As you can see, I've owned a fair few consoles.

Now the complaint. As a sister publication of Edge I would have expected a bit more maturity from you. Your constant illogical and ill-founded jibes at Dreamcast make you look very childish. Okay, so Sega is ceasing production of the Dreamcast to concentrate on software development, but to suggest that the Dreamcast is a poor quality machine with poor quality software is a joke. I have 20 games on my Dreamcast and to be honest they're all better than what is currently available on the PS2. The quality of software that has been produced for Dreamcast has been excellent, and to have the online gaming over two years before PS2 is to be commended.

I know the software library will improve in the next 12 months with GT3 and MGS2, but as an owner of both consoles I know which one gets 90% of the use in our household – and it isn't the PS2.
Richard Woodward via email

Um, Richard, which mag are you actually reading? I've just asked around the office and apart from a "slightly pissy caption" (©Sefton) in last issue's news, OPS2 has actually praised the Dreamcast and its games to high heaven (something not done in other PS2 magazines) – see last issue's Postal for our stance on rival consoles and this issue for more Sega news. Rich, mate, it's only a game.

TV OR NOT TV?
In response to Tom Chucki (last issue's Postal) and his attack of the mainstream press, I'd like to tell you of my experience.

Videogame journalists on TV are fools. End of story. Is the issue settled now? I work for a satellite broadcaster, and what I have learned is that technology journalists are usually up on the latest PC technology, but when it comes to videogames, they are completely uninformed.

A little example. On one show, we had Konami's Dance Stage Euro Mix arcade machine. First up, the presenter attempted to play it FACING AWAY from the screen. Then she announced 'the arrival of a new craze from Japan – "It's called Konami." The PR guy who brought in the machine didn't even spot the problem. Likewise, they announced the UK launch of the Xbox, when it was in fact the global press launch. This was followed by a shot of two dorks getting all worked up, waving their controllers about – but they were 'playing' the dancing demo (it's not even playable).

This is typical of how the mainstream media do not understand the world of videogames. These middle-aged, middle class, trumped-up journo's are too ignorant of such a growing culture, that sooner or later they are going to fall flat on there faces.
Russ, via email

While there are a few meeja faces out there who know their stuff (step forward, Mr Iain Lee), TV is a desert of decent games coverage with no oasis in sight. That said, the Bits girls – especially Fruit Loops Krotoski – are as on the money as anyone on TV re PS2. We also suggest our very own Disc Editor, Cat Channon, will whup your skinny white ass at Tekken in-between appearing on every games TV show in the Western Hemisphere. □

To be eligible for the StarLetter, remember to incliude your full name and address. OPS2 reserves the right to edit letters for clarity and style.

ARMORED CORE 2

Earth Year 223: following Earth's destruction, Zio Matrix, the World's largest corporation, obtained detailed plans relating to the Mars Research Project. Included in these plans was the Mars Terraforming Project, which detailed the use of unmanned artificially intelligent A.C. units.

It is you who will take on the challenge of dominating Mars, immersing yourself in visually stunning A.C. battles using a nearly endless combination of parts and weapons.

'Armored Core 2 is gorgeous, challenging and thorough -- and that's just the sort of title we like to see at a system launch'
- DAILY RADAR HIT

EVERGRACE

Enter an RPG world of intense magic and thunderous battles, where your survival is determined on acquiring powerful artefacts and fashioning them into your armour and weaponry.

Facing evil reborn, two spellbinding fantasy adventures await Darius and Sharline as well as fascinating characters and unforgiving monsters.

'Evergrace is both a solid and completely enjoyable role-playing game experience'
- IGN.COM

ETERNAL RING

Cain, a young magician, is sent by his King to investigate mysterious happenings on the 'Island of No Return'. Legend has it that magical powers lie dormant at the heart of the island, protected by enormous dragons. Armed with only his sword and natural talent as a sorcerer, Cain attempts to be the first person to return from the island alive.

As Cain, you must venture forth through challenging scenarios whilst defeating any foe that stands in the way of you and your search for the ultimate Magic Ring.

"Eternal Ring for the PS2 will satisfy your hunger for a bigger, better, first person RPG"
- GAMEPRO.COM 4.5/5.0

IC GAMING
EST GAMES ON PS2

WORDS: BEN LAWRENCE

STAR WARS: STARFIGHTER

One of the biggest cultural reference points of the 20th Century has spawned its first PS2 game. And it's a Force to be reckoned with.

Publisher: Activision
Developer: LucasArts
Players: 1-2
Release: March 2001
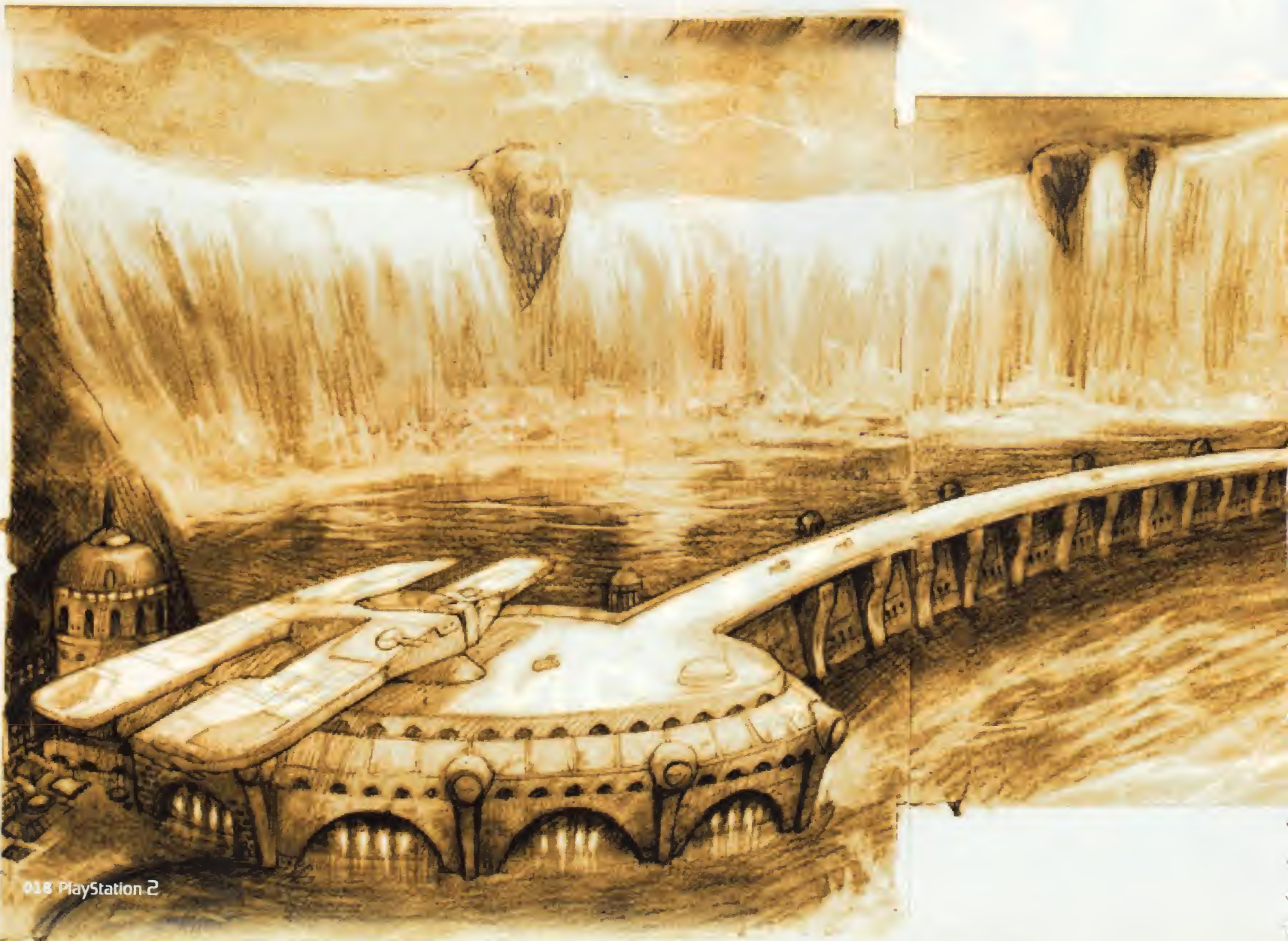
A popular film magazine recently voted *Star Wars* 'the best film ever made' with *The Empire Strikes Back* coming in at number seven. And whilst these slabs of sci-fi have been hailed as cinematic triumphs, their videogame counterparts have often proved to be – how can we put it? – a little on the crap side.

Let's take a look at the PSone's hall of shame... *The Phantom Menace* was critically panned for it's ill-conceived levels and nonsensical plot. *Star Wars Jedi Power Battles*, a 'action' remake of *The Phantom Menace* game only with added sheen. *Star Wars Demolition* resembled a tenuous *Vigilante 8*-a-like racer, *Masters Of Teräs Käsi* was a beat 'em up where Han and Chewy faced off (though some considered the fact that you kick Chewy's arse to be a plus point) and *Rebel Assault II* was pretty ghastly. It's hardly inspiring to hear that yet another *Star Wars* console game has been conceived.

But strike LucasArts down and it returns more powerful than you could possibly imagine. John Williams' *Duel Of The Fates* kicks in, triumphant brasses and Old Spice choral chants fill the room, then out of the star speckled blackness of the TV a sleek yellow Naboo N-1 fighter darts across the screen. Laser fire, anti-gravity explosions and the homely 'threep-perp' of R2 cascade from the TV and assault the senses like a Tuscan Raider ambush. It's PlayStation 2's first *Star Wars* game – *Starfighter*, a game that by all accounts, appears to have the formula to halt the spread of wonky *Star Wars* console games and looked to the wonder that is *Star Wars* Games On The PC.

DARTH TYRANNOUS

The plot of *Star Wars: Starfighter* runs parallel with the action from Lucas's kiddy-flick *The Phantom Menace* and involves three very different characters, none of whom is an all-American boy with a high Midiclorian count. In fact, of the three characters slated to appear in the game, only one, Rhys Dallows a trainee Naboo pilot, is firmly fighting for the 'good guys'. Vana is a Naboo pilot who's gone AWOL and now hires herself out across the galaxy as a freelance fighter pilot while Nym is a slimy green alien pirate with a romanticised Robin Hood perspective of the galaxy. Each owns their own craft and we can vouch from playing an early copy of the game that they all handle superbly.

After an initial training mission through Naboo's canyons you are then thrust into a convoy mission escorting Amidala's ship through space as she prepares to meet with the Trade Federation. The N-1 fighter handles with total grace, manoeuvring through hunks of asteroid belt and packs of Trade Federation aggressors deftly and competently. Nym's ship, available in later levels is heavier, loaded with torpedoes and the physics implemented behind it give it a heavy, heaving feel as it crawls through the sky. Although two of the three ships available (see The Force Of Three) don't actually feature in any of the *Star Wars* films, each has a distinct *Star Wars* quality about them, something that should keep potential critics quiet. The agonised screech of laser fire that accompanies every battle is warmly familiar from the films but the pitch and yore of the craft plus the targeting system and mission structure all take their cues from Warthog's well received *Star Trek: Invasion* and Psygnosis's successful *Colony Wars* franchise. Many missions are space-based but an equal amount of sorties take place over the green terrain of Naboo.

One instance involves a transport ship desperately trying to outrun on-coming Trade Federation droid ships. The transport is speeding as fast as possible away from the invaders, churning up the bank of a river as it desperately tries to use the currents to sweep it away but the droids fall from the sky, take their positions on the ground and try to obliterate the ship. In order to successfully protect the transport you have to destroy the two droid carriers by employing the services of your wingmen. This is where a mindless blaster turns into real air combat. →

JAMES ZHANG
2 · 1 · 2000

TIME LINE

Set during the turmoil of *Episode One*, where exactly do our three unique characters tie in with the *Star Wars* universe?

After Rhys's first mission (guarding Amidala) he suffers irreparable damage, his ship being thrown deep into space and out of the system. Frantic for help he manages to locate Vana, the ex-Naboo pilot who helps him out. Vana is also in trouble though. The Trade Federation are trying to kill her and escaping their clutches she accidentally encounters Nym. Unfortunately for Vana, she stole Nym's ship some years before and he wants his revenge. So amidst all these personal vendettas, the three misfits have to forge new bonds, save themselves, work together and play an instrumental part in the Trade Federation's downfall. Easy...

Picking bogeys off has never been so satisfying.

"Great work, kid! Now let's blow this joint..."
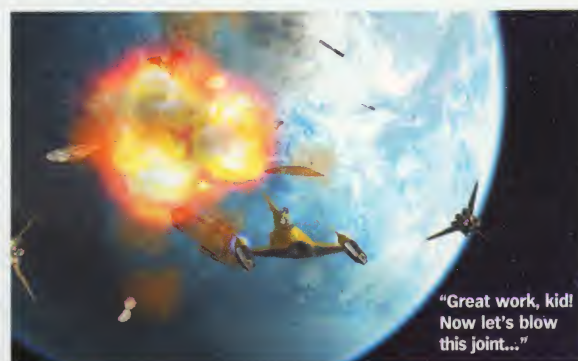
If ever there was a near miss in the galaxy I think we've just witnessed it.

//John Williams' *Duel of the Fates* kicks in, Old Spice choral chants fill the room and a Naboo N-1 fighter darts across the screen//

Wingmen will be an integral part of *Starfighter*, offering assistance in various forms throughout the game as they did in the PC's brilliant *Star Wars* sim *Tie-Fighter*. Depending how strategically you feel you should employ them, they can be ordered to flank positions, to protect a target, concentrate all their power on a specific area or take out the nearest and most immediate dangers to the mission.

The missions we encountered certainly threw you in at the deep end and we found many had to be played through a couple of times to get the grasp of handling the wingmen. Once we managed to coax or order our men to their target, the game proved itself as taxing on the brain as it is on the trigger finger. There's a considerable amount of thinking on your feet, always planning the whys and hows of a situation before it actually occurs. Do you send your wingmen forward to attack a target before it becomes a threat or do you risk an attack but have a full company by your side prepared to fight? But as you'll learn and as a wise man once said, "Don't get cocky, kid."

For those with poor co-ordination, the combination of moving yourself through numerous dimensions plus the added burden of taking responsibility of your fellow fighters all at warp speed does prove a little like trying to spin plates with your hands tied behind your back. It takes time and training and thankfully these options are included.

DARTH MORTIS

Not only is *Star Wars: Starfighter* playing well, even in this early version, but Naboo and the surrounding star systems are expertly designed. Considering the horizon on Naboo is often miles away, even at this stage, there is very little pop-up and virtually no fogging. The terrains are also real, with undulating polygons, not bitmapped flat plains and this proves very handy for darting behind rocks or into crevasses to escape enemy fire. Draw distance is also tremendous. During one mission a city on Theed is under siege and puts up a protective bubble similar to

Targeting systems are vitally important. You'll need them unlike that brat Luke.

Bingo! Bull's-eye! Hole in one! Spot on! That couldn't have gone better could it?

The sky at night. Usually peaceful. If you discount the laser fire, death by ship-load and intergalactic turmoil, that is.

Brilliant lighting and FX adds depth to *Starfighter*'s battle scenes.

the one's used during the Gungan battle for Naboo. From a great range it's visible as a small semi-transparent blue sphere. Up close it is a monstrous shield, humming with energy and crackling as laser fire slams into it.

An early two-player game utilised the vast plains of Naboo with goals at either end of the battle field in which you must slam your opponent's stolen flag. Droids hover at intervals over the flying area and as well as your gunhappy enemy they'll try to knock you spiralling out of the sky. Capture The Flag is a well worn concept for a two-player game but it is compensated for by other two-player games which involve (surprise) racing and, almost inevitably, blasting each other to as many shards as possible for points.

All the indicators point to *Starfighter* avoiding the misfortunes that plagued *Star Wars* games on the PSone. Its combination of complex missions and great handling show a blend of arcade accessibility (the N64's *Rogue Squadron*) and PC depth (the *X-Wing* and *TIE Fighter* games) that will serve it well on PlayStation 2. We'll have an exclusive review next issue so look out for further developments on what promises to be a blinding, chart-topping title. □

ON TARGET?
STAR WARS. STARFIGHTER

Breaking the *Star Wars* mould and doing it in warp drive. *Starfighter* is looking very promising indeed.

FORCE
There's no Jedi mysticism, just blasting. Lots of it.

DROIDS
There are hundreds of enemies, rich in AI waiting to be killed.

HANDLING
It'll take time to get to grips with, but worth it in the end.
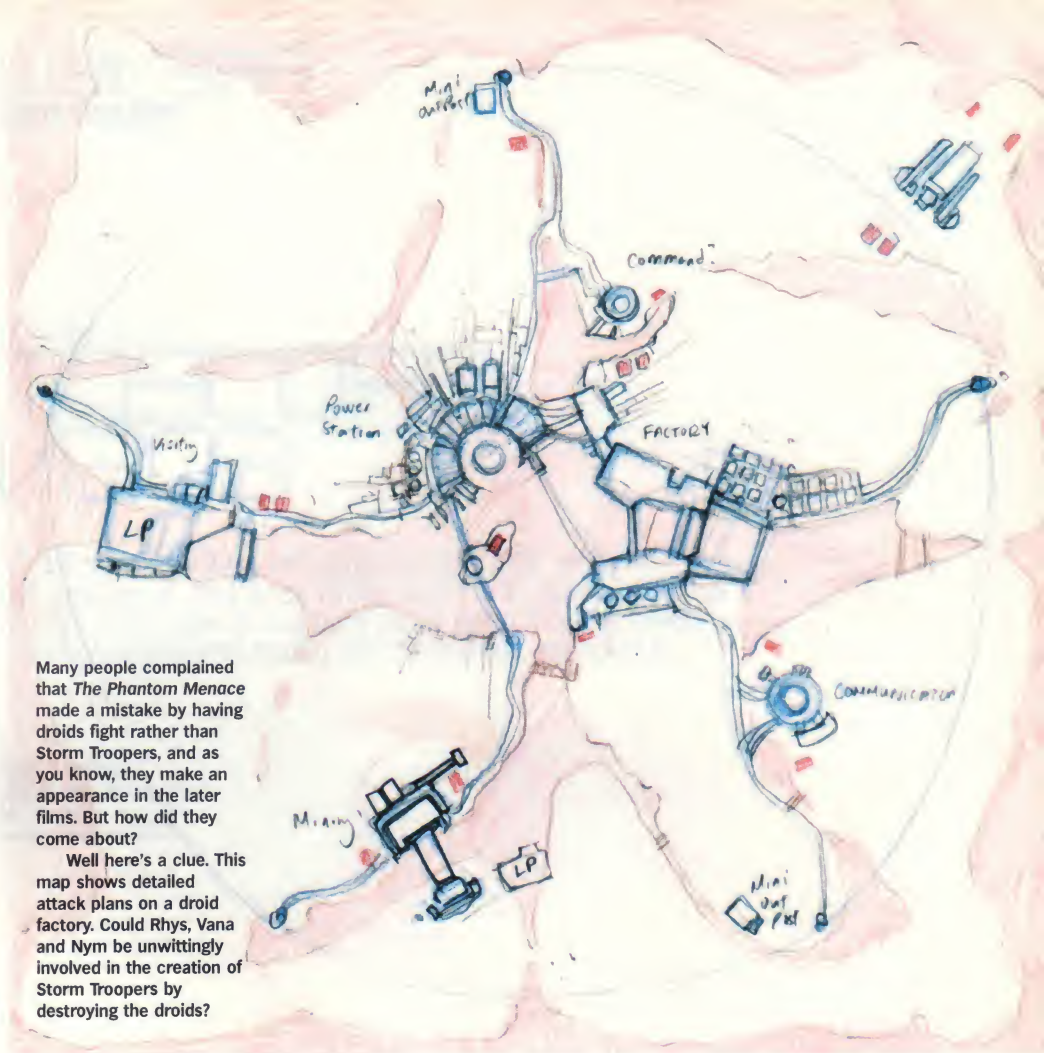
Many people complained that *The Phantom Menace* made a mistake by having droids fight rather than Storm Troopers, and as you know, they make an appearance in the later films. But how did they come about?

Well here's a clue. This map shows detailed attack plans on a droid factory. Could Rhys, Vana and Nym be unwittingly involved in the creation of Storm Troopers by destroying the droids?

From lava filled pits to the cold wastes of outer space, *Starfighter* takes you everywhere and does it in style.

Starfighter not only plays like a blinder but utilises the PS2's power to create stunning scenes like this.

THE FORCE OF THREE

There are three ships dedicated to overthrowing the Trade Federation. Here are their schematics for you to salivate over until you're able to get a copy of the game for yourself.

N-1 NABOO FIGHTER
Sleek, yellow/chrome body, handles like a dream and has an R2 pod inbuilt to help with vital navigation and repairs. Piloted by Rhys Dallows it is a sturdy craft specifically designed for dogfights and is armed with proton torpedoes, laser cannons and deflector shields.

THE GUARDIAN
Piloted by Vana, the Guardian is the quietest, least combat worthy ship. It does have tremendous manoeuvring ability and stealth that make it an awesome ship. Also fitted with an R2 pod it is a devastating and highly effective fighter craft.

THE HAVOC
Heavy and fully armed Nym's pirate ship is equipped with bombs, lasers, a rotating turret gun and heavy shielding. What it lacks in handling and built-in R2 pod it makes up for in brute strength and daunting appearance. Great for land-based missions and bomb runs.

There's something about this scene that suggests all is not well in the world.

WORDS: MIKE GOLDSMITH

PROJECT EDEN

From the team that created the original *Tomb Raider* comes a vision of a future world gone bad. To redress the balance, you'll need more than just a vest and a couple of revolvers. You'll need the Urban Protection Agency...

Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Core Design
Players: 1-4
Release: September

ara – there, we've said it. In just over four years, *Tomb Raider* has sold around 30 million copies on four different formats, spawned everything from beach towels to the forthcoming Hollywood blockbuster and has made more than a few quid for its developer, Core Design. But just as one song doesn't make a album, one game doesn't make a developer. Core Design has the likes of *Fighting Force*, *Skeleton Krew* and *AH-3 ThunderStrike* in its back catalogue but while none of these have managed to escape the all-enveloping shadow of Lara, the Derby-based developer intends to change all that for PlayStation 2. While work continues apace at Core on other projects (see Core Curriculum) the first will appear in just over three months time – and while its creators may have come from the team that crafted Lara's debut outing, this game has nothing to do with artifacts and archaeology. Welcome to *Project Eden*.

Project Eden is set in a future where the world has simply run out of space. Chronic overpopulation has forced cities to build upwards rather than outwards and, connected only by a tangled web of roads, walk-ways and service tubes, the ground below is now a thing of the past as towering skyscrapers grow towards the heavens. At the top, the affluent breathe clean air and feel the sun on their skin. Head below, and things get darker. Upper-class palaces give way to lower-class slums which, thousands of storeys and feet down, finally end up at ground level and a strictly off limits sewer of derelict buildings, long since abandoned – but not uninhabited.

GOING DOWN

It's in one such city that *Project Eden*'s tale begins. You control a team of four members of the Urban Protection Agency, a crack force who deal with any disturbances that threaten this status quo. The UPA are called in to find out what's happened to a team of maintenance technicians who have disappeared

FOUR PLAY
Meet the four members of the Urban Protection Agency you'll be taking for a day trip into chaos...

AMBER
Job: UPA Cyborg Division
Age: 27/**Sex:** Female
After suffering horrific injuries in a Skyway accident at the age of 19, Amber chose to become one of the UPA's 'Metal Heads' rather than have normal human-cyborg reconstructive surgery. Amber has since become increasingly withdrawn and machine-like.
Expertise: Quiet, calm and somewhat morose.

MINOKO
Job: UPA Tech Division
Age: 20/**Sex:** Female
An orphan who was entered into the UPA's youth training program at the age of nine, Minoko showed high levels of aptitude with computers. She became a full UPA member at only 17 but has limited field experience, having only worked with Carter and his team for a year.
Characteristics: Young, cheerful and optimistic.

ANDRE
Job: UPA Engineering Division
Age: 32/**Sex:** Male
Andre is a skilled engineer with the natural ability to understand and repair mechanical and electrical systems. He joined the UPA at 25, after his previous job as a SkyLift engineer. UPA bosses think Andre has an attitude problem yet he's expected to fill Carter's shoes.
Expertise: Confident, talented and restless.

CARTER
Job: UPA Squad Leader
Age: 36/**Sex:** Male
Despite a successful career and plenty of experience in the UPA, Carter is facing a crossroads. He takes his job as Squad Leader seriously but is facing retirement in just four years – he must move to a desk job at the age of 40, which is standard in the UPA.
Characteristics: Serious, in-command and in-control.

Killing on the move. You'll need to think on your feet if you are to survive.

The settings are spectacular as well as strangely eerie.

while repairing factory machinery belonging to the Real Meat corporation. Where has the machinery gone? Who would want it? Why did the machinery fail in the first place? What does Real Meat do? To find out, you must take your team beyond city limits and head down into the depths of the metropolis...

Sounds like your bog-standard sci-fi adventure, right? Wrong. Rather than concentrating on just one protagonist, *Project Eden* is a squad-based affair. The game revolves around four characters: UPA officers Carter, Minoko, Andre and Amber (see Four Play) – each of whom has different abilities. To successfully progress through *Project Eden*, you MUST swap between these four squad members. You'll be able to switch between them at the click of a button, taking one off to explore/fight/etc while leaving your other colleagues to perform character-specific actions and mini-games. You can even take control of the equipment used by the UPA squad, including rover bots and gun emplacements (see Boys Toys).

ONE INTO FOUR DOES GO

The co-operative element at *Project Eden*'s heart is further underlined by the introduction of a split-screen multiplayer mode. Not only can up to four people play together, but they can choose the perspective from which they play – swapping between first- and third-person views. Again, this is vital for completing certain tasks but allows *Project Eden* to work as a combination of two game genres – a *Tomb Raider*-meets-*Resident Evil* puzzle-based adventure or an adrenaline-packed first-person shooter (especially if you eschew the co-operative narrative for a good old-fashioned four-player Deathmatch).

Whatever the perspective or tactic, danger lurks around every corner. Inevitably, that means casualties and thus every likelihood that your four squad members will end up in body bags before you've even started. Thankfully, Core has ensured the four characters share a collective energy resource. Provided the team has enough energy between it, members can be →

Although your team can co-operate you can fight alone if you want.

Tomb Raider elements are clearly evident.

MONSTER CLUB
At ground level it all gets a bit nasty...

At the rancid heart of *Project Eden*'s plot are the nightmarish creatures who inhabit the lower levels of the city. The product of genetic engineering, these muties can morph in real-time from a seemingly-harmless dog into your worse nightmare. Slugs bite at your ankles, birds transform into vicious flying lizards, four-legged spiders birth hundreds of smaller creatures... The idea is that seemingly everyday animals can rise up to literally bite you in the arse – and when the biter is a devil dog who makes *Resident Evil*'s zombie hounds look like Snoopy and the bitee is you, it's best to make sure that the UPA member you control carries a *very* big gun...

You can always rely on your trusty robot.

Combat always seems to be on the go. At least you're not a sitting duck this way.

//Rather than concentrating on just one protagonist, *Project Eden* is a squad based game//

☑ individually regenerated upon their death. True, you will have to trudge back to the last ReGen point to be brought back to life but again, this tactics-driven gameplay marks *Project Eden* out from the pack.

BUT HOW DOES IT PLAY?

Despite having nearly two years of development behind it, *Project Eden* has only recently come together as a 'full' game. Previous reports have shown visuals from the game's PC development and it's only now that *OPS2* can exclusively show images from the PlayStation 2 version. In January we travelled to Core's Derby HQ to see and play the PlayStation 2 version and can report back that so far things are looking better than expected.

Visually, the game looks lush – smooth character animation and 60fps frame rates have already been nailed while the mutated monsters who'll make your spiral downwards that much harder are perfectly realised (see Monster Club). Design-wise, things get progressively darker as you venture further into the game with levels 'decorated' with rust, garbage and other detritus as you head downwards. The skyscrapers themselves are similarly imposing – Rummery and the *Eden* team choosing to ditch the now-clichéd neon pulse of *Blade Runner* for the urban feel of Paul Verhoeven's *RoboCop* or, more pointedly, the block wars of *Judge Dredd*'s Mega City One.

One of the issues *OPS2* had before seeing *Eden* was, as with all games designed for both PS2 and PC, how Core's title played with the humble Dual Shock 2 – console games are all too often let down by a sloppy translation of the PC's mouse-and-keyboard interface. Happily, *Project Eden* works just fine. In both first- and third-person mode, the L3 analogue stick controls player movement while R3 acts like a mouse, controlling an on-screen target cursor which is used to aim. Cue much strafing and, in a cool addition, the ability to retreat while firing at the advancing mutants over your shoulder.

BOYS TOYS

It's not just UPA soldiers you'll be controlling, it's the high tech gadgets they make. Here's a rundown of the gizmos on offer and a few of the weapons you'll be issued with

FLY CAM
Does what it says on the tin. Generate this fella and zoom off to see what's happening around corners, over chasms, in bullet-strewn areas... Anywhere you don't fancy going yourself, basically.

ROVER
A Big Trak-styled mobile camera much like the Fly Cam, but this beast can also collect items or flick switches in hard-to-access or dangerous areas.

SECURITY CAM
Think the camera positioned in your local high street. These can be spotted around the levels, in suitable positions. The *Eden* team say that these can be later upgraded to Sentry Guns...

LASER PULSE GUN
The UPA's standard issue weapon. You'll be given more equipment and weapons as the game progresses but this still packs a punch.

TIMESHOCK
A weapon that can be used to slow down targets to a crawl rather than kill them. Hit fire, sit back and watch those monsters morph slooooooowly.

DISK GUN
Fires disk-shaped ammo that can bounce off walls – a laser target shows the trajectory it will take while the radar shows an overhead view.

PLUS...
Also on the cards are pipe bombs (pictured), multiple modes for the UPA guns (the Pulse Gun can be set to either Rapid Fire or a Single Burst) and mines – click to mine-view and lie in wait before detonating yourself!

Structures are well constructed and add tremendous atmosphere.
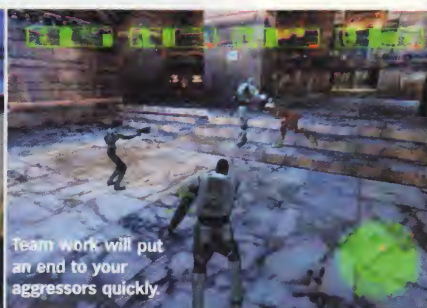
Team work will put an end to your aggressors quickly.

The HUD will display items and weapons at your command.

Best of all has to be the news that the whole thing just, well, works. The interface that allows you to swap between characters has been substantially tweaked for the PS2 (you can now simply click your on-screen cursor to jump bodies as well as using the traditional interface) and the four-player split-screen option is most definitely up, running and playing smoother by the day. On our visit to Core, OPS2 played the PS2 four-player option and was able to run about, let off weapons, follow colleagues and even watch the other characters as they left our field of vision. An example? Core's Operations Manager Adrian Smith controlled Andre while we played as Minoko. In Smith's screen, Andre fired off bullets at the elevator that contained our character. In our screen, we could see Andre's efforts to take us down and waved him away as we headed up. Deathmatches will truly be something to look forward to.

With news just in that Core has delayed the title from March to September for yet further tweaks, it's evident that this is no stop-gap until the next generation of *Tomb Raider* appears. Instead of 'What's *Project Eden*?' the question on everyone's lips this autumn could just be, 'Lara who?' ☐

ON TARGET?
PROJECT EDEN

If you go down to the lift today, you're sure of a bi- IT BIT MY FACE OFF! *Eden*'s most definitely on track and 'twisted' to say the least.

TEAMWORK
Want to make it past Sub-Level One? You'll have to use everyone.

GIZMO GAZMO
Hover bots and sentry guns to satisfy the gadget hounds.

NASTY THINGS
Just you wait 'til you see the big nasty spider thing.

Point gun to ugly bloke's head and squeeze trigger. Sticky.

If you're unlucky some of the bleeders will fight back so you've got to be very quick!

Amber may be a girl but she packs a hell of a wallop. Probably the strongest of the bunch.

A rare moment outside. savour it because inside is chock full of pitfalls and dangers.

CORE CURRICULUM
So what else are Core up to for PlayStation 2? Here's a brief rundown.

TOMB RAIDER: NEXT GEN
Work progresses on Lara's next escapade (See *OPS2* #01), with characters and cities currently being modelled and much research being undertaken. Reports of a more mature, *X-Files* feel to the next generation of *Tomb Raider* are correct, with Europe being the setting (think the gothic streets of Prague as a template) and a complex plot promised that eventually involves the supernatural. *OPS2* is under pain of death not to reveal further plot details but after seeing Core's early designs for the game, we can confirm this ain't no *Tomb Raider* you've seen before.

HERDY GERDY
The game on everyone's lips as the hybrid of purist gameplay and cartoon accessibility. Ostensibly a herding game as designed by Disney, *Herdy Gerdy* tells the adventures of a shepherd boy who must save his father from a sleeping sickness that has enveloped him. To do this he must win his village's herding contest and to do that, he must first progress through some of the most graphically-beautiful scenery yet seen on PS2. How you herd such different creatures as Honks and Grimps to the end of each level is entirely up to you but every action has a knock-on effect. It's *Zelda* meets *Sheep* meets Mouse Trap with a touch of Ape Escape – prepare for your jaw to drop.

TOP SECRET!
Due to be unveiled at this year's E3, Core is currently working on a PS2 update of one of their old franchises. Expect arcade action, terrain-ripping weaponry, realistic physics, pick-up-and-play appeal and some gorgeously-modelled vehicles to control. And no, it's not *Ninja*.
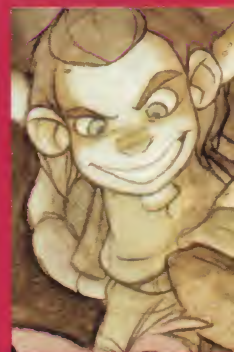
WORDS: STEVE MERRETT

EXTERMINATION

A deserted Antarctic base. A shape-shifting creature intent on killing and absorbing all it finds. A horror classic in the making?

Publisher: SCEE
Developer: Deep Space Inc
Players: 1
Release: May 2001

According to the posters for John Carpenter's The Thing 'Man is the warmest place to hide'. Extermination shamelessly plunders this and other key concepts from the 1982 shockfest. In addition to reworking the main theme of a deadly organism that alters its DNA to transform into gruesome guises, SCEE's arcade/adventure also makes strong use of an isolated Antarctic setting. The claustrophobic nature of dark corridors and the inhospitable exteriors of a deserted reasearch building are also well utilised to create an eerie setting. Underlying tension runs throughout the game – Deep Space Inc turn the screw with fleeting glimpses of unseen horrors and a plot that, as with Carpenter's classic, casts suspicions that even your closest colleagues could be harbouring by a deadly creature.

Set on Christmas Eve, 2005, a 'Red Light' reconnaissance team has been sent to investigate a scientific establishment at the South Pole that has failed to respond to contact attempts. On arriving, the agents find the base deserted, with only the occasional smear of the red stuff to indicate the boffins were ever there. As the weather outside grows ever more inhospitable making it impossible to contact Red Light HQ or go beyond the base's perimeter fence, it becomes obvious that something is stalking them. With only one apparent survivor and members of the Red Light squad being picked off in gruesome fashions, Extermination's cat and mouse basis comes to the fore.

While Extermination owes much to The Thing, it also borrows from Capcom's Resident Evil series and doffs a bloodstained cap to Starship Troopers' gung-ho shenanigans. While the SCEE title is best described as an exploratory shoot-'em-up, the similarities to Resident Evil come via beautifully detailed interior and exterior locations. The rooms are also viewed using Capcom's trademark quirky camera angles, while

RED LIGHT DISTRICT
For those about to die (horribly), we salute you...

Dennis Riley
Red Light's commanding officer. A weapons expert, Riley is renowned for keeping a cool head under enormous pressure.

Roger Grigman
Riley's wingman and Red Light sergeant. The master of unarmed combat and a bit of a demon with a Bowie knife.

Cindy Tien
The only survivor at the South Pole base. A bacteriologist, she knows more about the DNA creature than she is letting on.

Jumping from danger is something you'll have to get used to. If you're not diving away from an up-turned train then you're leaping away from all manner of scuttling beasties.

Try not to get infected. It's far worse than it looks believe it or not.

When paddling in water be sure to avoid bad things. Like electricity.

the cinematic trickery is extended to cut-sequences that show off OTT gore effects as the Red Light team battle insectoid critters spawned by the organism. The gameplay, however, represents a huge step forward from *Resident Evil*'s laborious 'turn and move' control system and puzzle basis, opting to play up the hunt aspects as the Red Light team track down the creature and its offspring. As such, running, firing off shots, leaping over crevasses, dangling by your fingertips from icy ledges and collecting items are easily effected, ensuring the player is never bogged down in control trivialities.

Extermination looks set to succeed because it mixes gameplay elements as easily as its central adversary combines DNA elements. Atmospherics such as banging doors, work to create a game where you'll feel death could lurk anywhere. This palpable feeling of dread is bolstered with action sequences where Red Light bring out the big guns and take on the creature in all its guises. It's difficult to tell how much lasting appeal the came will inspire, but the gradual unlocking of the base's laboratories and the useful items they reveal should balance it out. If so, horror will have a new face later this year. And if the DNA-splicing beast has it's way, it will be yours... □

ON TARGET?
EXTERMINATION

Superior-looking sci-fi shocker, boasting a delicate mix of arcade-oriented action and a genuinely oppressive atmosphere.

GRAPHICS
Lavish backdrops, well-animated heroes and gore. Lots of.

GAMEPLAY
A well-judged mix of shooting gallery and exploratory elements.

COMPETITION
Um, anyone mention *Resident Evil Code: Veronica X?*

If you get attacked from the aliens make sure you don't become a host by treating yourself immediately.

Lifts may conceal hidden dangers so try and think of alternative routes to difficult-to-reach areas.

You can't stand fire. The aliens can. And electricity. And extreme cold.

One slash and the big purple monster went all limp.

"Look, I've lost my key. Be a sweetie and open up..."

WORDS: MARK WALBANK

OPERATION WINBACK

It may be an old N64 title but *Operation WinBack*'s stealthy conversion to the PS2 is already showing that it has nothing to hide.

Publisher: Midas Interactive
Developer: KOEI
Players: 1-4
Release: April

We know that the acronym SCAT has more than one definition so to prevent any sniggering we shall concentrate on the one supplied by developer KOEI – Strategic Covert Actions Team. *WinBack* is not a game about jazz musicians nor does the hero of the title, Jean-Luc Cougar, do anything unmentionable. it's a serious game about terrorism, heroism and pumping bullets into anyone wearing a moustache.

While we're at it let us put your mind at rest on another important matter: this is already playing better than the N64 version which was released to popular derision in 1999. Though reasonably playable, *WinBack* on the N64 suffered from shocking draw distance – a serious flaw that resulted in players squinting into the fog to locate enemies. Grainy textures and clumsy controls did not help matters either. However, those who were put off by the mixed reviews of the original will be pleased to hear that the draw distance difficulties have been resolved for the newly-titled *Operation WinBack* on PS2.

With this imperfection resolved the player is promised a much more tense and enjoyable title. The plot is pure Austin Powers and involves diabolical scenarios, silly code names and acronyms galore. As part of the crack undercover team (SCAT) it is your task to defeat a gang of terrorists (the Crying Lions) who have infiltrated an allied defence establishment. They now have the capability to launch a devastating missile attack with the government's own GULF Strategic Weapon System. A generous total of 31 stages are on offer which will see the hero infiltrating offices, courtyards, warehouses, sewers and the underground GULF control centre itself.

It is clear that *WinBack* has taken some inspiration from *Metal Gear Solid* but it has one important feature which marks it out from its espionage rival. Jean-Luc has the ability to take immediate cover behind objects and then 'swing out' to eliminate opponents. This adds a wonderfully cinematic touch

SQUARE DEALINGS

WinBack includes three multiplayer games: Deathmatch, Lethal Tag and Cube Hunt which is the most novel and enjoyable. Here's how to play it.

Set the scene
Enter a multiplayer stage and both players are given an overhead view of the arena.

Colour coding
Remember, in Cube Hunt players must collect every colour in a particular sequence.

Snatch and grab
Shoot your opponent and he loses a cube. But watch out because he's going to be hunting you too.

Exploding barrels can be a great way to dispatch opponents. Stay well back.

The sewers are crawling with enemies. These terrorists will endure anything to thwart you.

Infrared beams must be disabled by shooting out the control boxes.

to the stealth components of the game and makes *WinBack* an exhilarating proposition. Imagine PSone light-gun masterpiece *Time Crisis* but with the player granted full control over the character's movements and actions.

Another vital element which should ensure *Operation WinBack*'s success is the addition of gadgets. Enter a darkened warehouse, for instance, and a mounted flashlight on your weapon can highlight enemies stalking you in the gloom. Card keys, first-aid kits, wireless explosives and the ability to destroy control boxes to disable infrared beams promise to further enhance the stealth experience.

In addition to the Story mode, KOEI has been keen to maximise the potential of the PlayStation 2's MultiTap capability. Three tantalising multiplayer options will be available: Lethal Tag, Cube Hunt and Team Battle. A combination of deathmatch modes linked with racing to find a series of colour-coded cubes from around the arenas should ensure the title's longevity. *Operation WinBack* may not arouse *Metal Gear Solid* levels of hysteria but its focus on espionage over mayhem should make it a title well worth purchase before Konami's masterpiece is released at the end of the year. □

ON TARGET?
OPERATION WINBACK

Localisation and a few tweaks are needed, but otherwise *WinBack* is ready for a UK release.

CAMERA
Can be adjusted manually but is still quite fiddly.

STEALTH
It's no *MGS* but popping out from cover is top fun.

CHALLENGE
So much to offer and includes great multiplayer options.
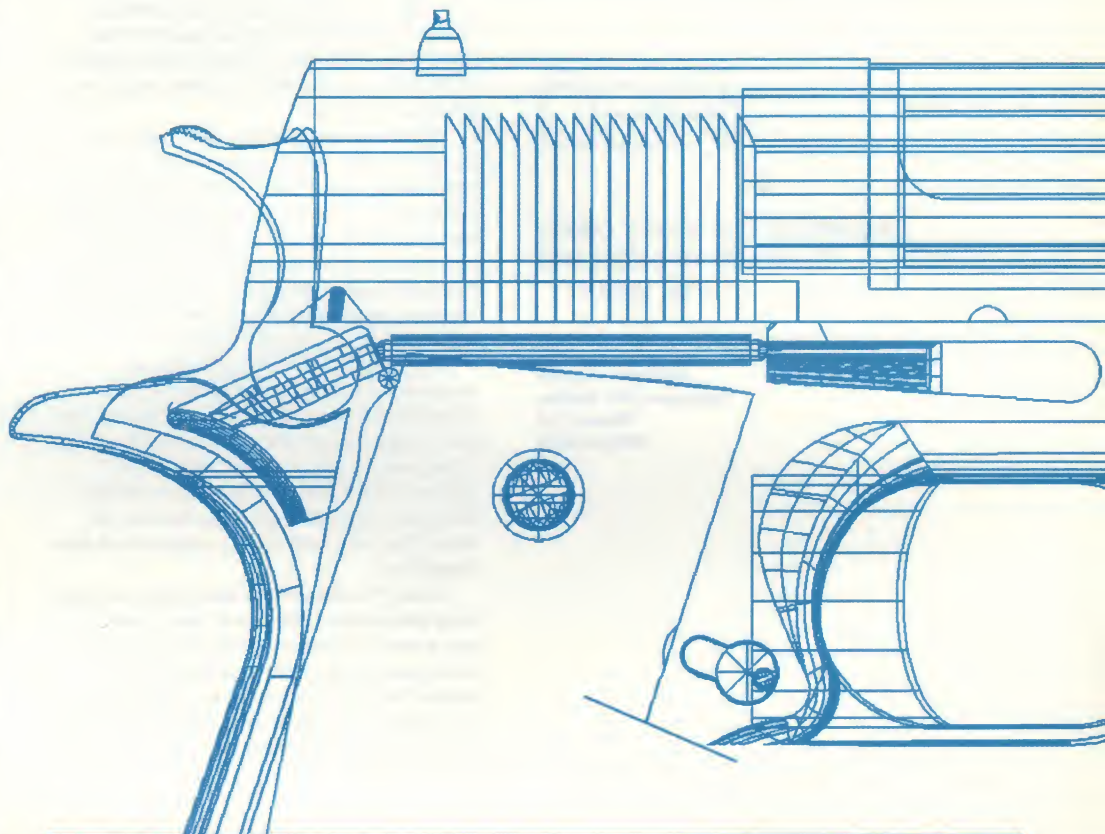
Jean-Luc can take cover behind most objects. Auto targeting proves very reliable.

SILENT AND DEADLY

Can *Operation WinBack* live up to the names of these three famous stealth-'em-ups?
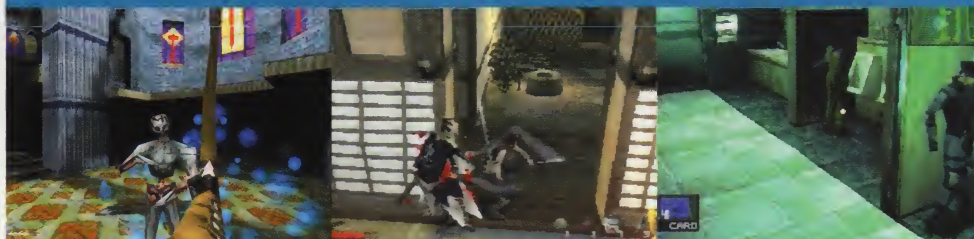
Thief: The Dark Project (PC)
Looking Glass Studios' historical thriller which saw players sneaking up on enemies in a medieval setting. Not an easy task in full armour.

Tenchu: Stealth Assassins (PSone)
A cruelly underrated game which placed a heavy emphasis on ninja stealth and skillful executions. The first PSone sneak-'em-up was released in 1998.

Metal Gear Solid (PSone)
Hideo Kojima's espionage masterpiece which mixed gadgets, tension and explosive action in one heady package. So far unsurpassed.

The four player split-screen mode offers cooperative or deathmatch options. Stealth is encouraged and things can get incredibly tense.

WORDS: BEN LAWRENCE

RED

Re-writing the history books
in torrents of blood and
axle grease…

The scenario behind *Red* is frightening. Japan, having survived the obliteration dealt to her by the Enola Gay's apocalyptic cargo, fights on against the Allies. Russia invades from the north in an attempt to expand its territories both east and west (for it has already seized part of the crumbled German state) and in 1950, five years after the end of WWII, Japan is the only country still at war.

Divided into warring factions, the country's ultra effective war effort, once intended for outside aggressors turns in on itself. Japanese weaponry takes evolutionary leaps and soon every regiment throughout the country has possession of highly sophisticated mechanoid robots. Russian Japan, Republic Japan and Democratic Japan all struggle for domination but let's not get swamped by imaginary historics, all you need to know is that it's got guns. Gurt big guns.

Although expressions such as 'turn-based', 'mechanoid' and 'Japanese' are words that, when placed together, make most gamers want to run a mile, *Red* is looking blissfully refreshing. Not only do we have a great alternate history to relish but the combat system is sublime. Preparing to engage an enemy in battle is the usual grid hopping affair but once the action shifts to the battle field it is obvious where *Red*'s strengths lie.

Visually it's a departure for mech games, the robots being bullet-ridden clanking great hulks of metal that look in need of a scrap yard. These mechs are also accompanied by free thinking ground troops, an addition that could have complicated things should they have been fully reliant on your commands. Instead they think for themselves until you need them to concentrate their powers on specific targets. It was hard to judge whether juggling mechs and battalions would work before *Red* became playable but it works brilliantly.

First impressions of an early version of the game also threw up different thoughts. At first it looks deceivingly slow. There is a considerable amount of incidental text to wade through and vast numbers of tutorial points that need to be studied but these are perfectly offset by the gameplay. Although slow in pace it still, even at this early stage, manages to engage you with pure satisfaction garnered from peering down a barrel then gently squeezing the trigger and sending whatever's on the receiving end to a glorious, flaming end. Watching tiny, intricately detailed troops splattered and squashed to high heaven also has its plus points.

With so many mech games doing the rounds (*ZOE*, *Armoured Core*, *Gun Griffon Blaze* and *Robot Warlords* to name just a few) *Red* would, were it not shaping up to be a thoroughly entertaining piece of software, probably feel the strain of the competition. Thankfully though, with the blend of strategy and sumptuous visuals it could prove itself a far worthier game than was first imagined. □

ON TARGET?
RED

Red may look like 'just another mech game', but will it break out of the confines set by the genre? You betcha.

SOUND
Grinding, clunking and chugging along quite nicely thanks.
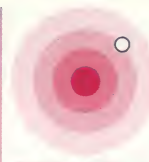
ORIGINALITY
Hardly ground breaking at the moment.
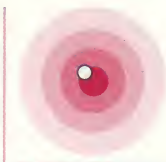
SLAUGHTER
Quite disturbing. Twisted limbs and bodies everywhere!

VIEW TO A KILL
Take your mechs for a bit of target practice…

As well as strategically placing your robots throughout the battle field, you'll also need to be a crack marksman. Depending on how advanced your robot is, you can opt to specifically target certain parts of your enemy's mech. But it isn't easy. To correctly hit vital components such as gun placements or legs you need to have first earned enough experience points to up-grade your aiming abilities. That in itself is like swimming through tar. You just know that this is going to be tough don't you?

Even though the majority of gameplay is turn-based you'll still need a sharp eye to take out approaching robot enemies.

72.13%

We can't afford to lose this one...not to HER!

Troops are just as effective as your robots so make sure to look after them.
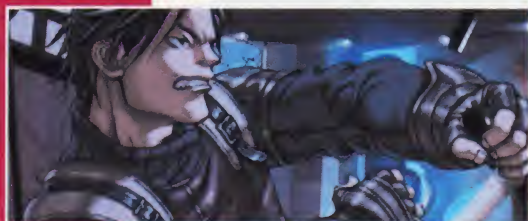
A brilliant blend of anime-style art and action makes *Red* a great play.

And the Isle of Man enters the arms race…

WORDS: RYAN BUTT

ACE COMBAT 4

Dust off that old Kenny Loggins vinyl and reach for the Raybans – the PlayStation 2 now has its very own *Top Gun*.

Publisher: SCEE
Developer: Namco
Players: 1-2
Release: Winter 2001

Currently being welded together at Namco's industrial-sized hanger in Japan, *Ace Combat 4* is going to be bigger and better than any of its previous airborne PSone incarnations and already looks odds-on to become the king of the skies on PS2. It's only competition at the moment seems to be JVC's less combat-based *Wing Over III*, but as it looks like they will be released at around the same time this year we'll have to stay grounded before we make our judgements.

The game will feature an original story line in which your chosen pilot must defy death in over 24 military-style missions. These range from ground and air strikes to rescue assignments, all of which are designed to test your piloting prowess to the limits. Okay, so far this could read like any *Ace Combat* game, but what really sets *Ace Combat 4* apart from its predecessors is the lavish looks, especially the sprawling landscapes that stretch for miles below your cockpit. These terrains are now sublimely detailed, boasting mountain ranges, river systems and even small towns. The increased gaming area that the PlayStation 2 allows means you can fly further into the horizon and dive right down into the pulsating heart of the cities.

Improved flying physics ensure that each of your high-speed craft now feel a great deal more versatile as they soar through the air. The extra control sensitivity afforded by the Dual Shock 2 is being utilised to produce a more realistic sensation of flight. Elusive barrel rolls and stomach-churning loops are now more essential than ever for avoiding the attentions of those particularly sticky bogeys. All the planes featured in the game are modelled on real-life aircraft, although Namco has yet to disclose exactly which ones they will include.

The developer has set the game slightly in the future, two years after previous PSone installment *Ace Combat 3*, where a sudden meteor shower has left the Earth battered, bruised and covered in craters. Now the aftermath has caused wars between various world powers over food, fuel and other vital supplies. The slightly more futuristic setting also increases the scope for more devastating weaponry to be invented.

Undoubtedly the Dogfight mode is the most welcome return for the PS2 version. Here, two players take to the skies with the aim of being the only pilot to land intact and it is likely that this mode will be both split-screen and i-Link compatible.

With no definite release date for *Ace Combat 4* as yet, we fully expect Namco to be forthcoming with more startling revelations about the game in the coming months. Having sampled some early in-game footage, though, we were impressed with how it's shaping up, and even just as a spectator you can almost feel the the G-force tearing up your cheeks while you hold on to your breakfast. Can't wait. □

ON TARGET?
ACE COMBAT 4
It won't be taking off for a while, but what can we glean from this very early version of Namco's ace fighter pilot?

GRAPHICS
Attention to detail, on the landscapes is very impressive.

PLANES
At last. A chance to live out your Maverick fantasies.

MISSIONS
Will hopefully be more varied than other *AC* games.

ACES HIGH
Namco's *Ace Combat* series is one of the longest-running PlayStation franchises. Remember these...

Ace Combat AKA Air Combat (1995)
The original, if now not the best by any means. Now available for around a tenner, AC serves-up a plethora of destructive missions and even boasts a cool two-player split-screen mode for dogfighting.

Ace Combat 2 AKA Air Combat 2 (1997)
The two-player mode vanished, but what we were left with was more varied missions and enough aircraft to fill all of Heathrow's terminals twice over. It rewarded aces with better planes and new missions.

Ace Combat 3: Electrosphere (1999)
Aside from some of the best graphics witnessed in a PSone flight sim, the Japanese version even boasted RPG-style story segments. Basically a super-flick shoot-'em-up that allowed you to look back for tailing bogeys. Skill.

As in previous *Ace Combat* games, you can opt to view the action from both inside and outside the cockpit...
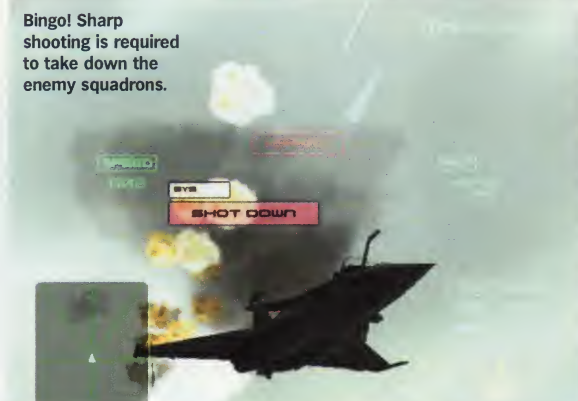
Bingo! Sharp shooting is required to take down the enemy squadrons.

SHOT DOWN

You can almost feel the G-force during the loops.

The planes are modelled on real-life aircraft...

Are you playing a game or watching a movie?

The mission replays are suitably compelling to watch.

WORDS: RYAN BUTT

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2001

The cat in the hat is back, but will he get a bigger stroke on PlayStation 2?

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Sports (Canada)
Players: 1-4
Out: TBA

How can PlayStation 2 possibly revolutionise the game of golf? Surely every avenue has been explored to death with each annual PSone offering up until now? Well, not quite it would appear. The analogue control capabilities that feature prominently in *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2001*, especially with the pressure-sensitive buttons of the Dual Shock 2, make the 'hit and hope' approach of previous golfing games a thing of the past. Now, every single shot can be measured to perfection and executed with accuracy so fine that passing gulls really should fear for their scalps.

Featuring the exclusive licences of some of the world's most challenging courses, including Pebble Beach, players will be able to play an altogether more strategic game of golf against some of the circuit's biggest names. Golfers such as Justin Leonard, Brad Faxon, Robert Damron and Mark Calcavecchia all turn out alongside Woods after having called in at EA Sports' Canadian studios to have their swings and follow-throughs recorded using the very latest motion capturing technology. Naturally, the results are outstanding and the somewhat glitchy looped animations of yesteryear have been replaced with some seamless swinging action that seems to cope with every possible outcome on the course. EA Sports must have worked poor Woods and his mates ragged filming the swings for this game, but the result pays off because you've not seen golf this smooth since the glory days of Corbett and Tarbuck.

Six modes of play are included in the package, such as Tour Challenge, Match Play and our favourite – the Skins game where you play for cash. But those fearing a gaming experience akin to watching paint dry – such is the pace of the sport – should be relieved that the game can be speeded up and tailored to suit your own requirements. Aside from excellent animation and presentation, it is the finely rendered courses, accurate down to the number of grass blades on the 18th hole (well, maybe not), that make this such an inviting game to play. If you've never had the handicap to be allowed onto such hallowed turf as these, experiencing the virtual versions is the next best thing.

Whereas previous golfing games have been somewhat mellow in the sound department, *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2001* also contains a lot more crowd interaction and team talks to help boost the atmosphere. Of course, with Woods being such a showman, often playing up to spectators with his prodigious ball control, it would be nice to see a bonus stage where players get to try some of his ball juggling skills for themselves. Then again, after seeing the amount of takes it took him to get it right for the Nike adverts, maybe EA Sports just didn't have enough film in its camera. □

ON TARGET?
TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2001

Current form has *Tiger Woods* shaping up to be one of the best golfing games yet, so let's see what makes it so good...

MOTION CAPTURING
The smoothest swinger yet?
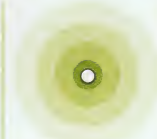
COURSES
The world's greatest recreated in almost perfect detail.

BALL JUGGLING
Tiger's got the tricks, but he only uses them in the intro.

SCHEMATICS
Tiger shows off his skills with a club.

As one of the planet's best-paid sporting heroes, Tiger is no stranger to turning on the style to win over the crowds. The intro sequence of *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2001* features some of his vast repertoire of ball-juggling skills which have netted him millions in advertising deals. But surely anyone can do it? Well, no actually.

1. Tiger starts with a simple keepy-uppy exercise in which he uses his nine iron to keep a golf ball in the air.

2. He then swings his arm behind his back and manages to retain control of the ball, despite not being able to see it.

3. Flipping the ball through his blind side, he swings his club back around and catches it round the front. Neat, huh? But it's not over quite yet.

4. His breathtaking sequence finishes with the young master effortlessly trapping the ball on the end of his club and bringing it to a complete rest. Git.

Tiger prepares to let rip with one of his trademark monstrous drives...
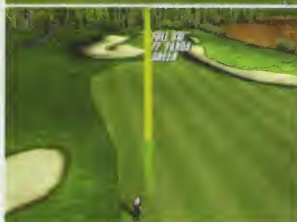
On-screen displays tell you exactly how far it is to the hole, thus reducing the risk of over-hitting.

Justin Leonard and numerous other professional golfers were drafted in to provide authentic motion capturing for the game.
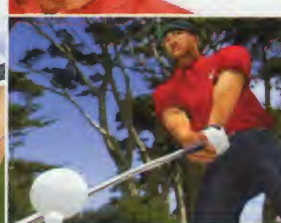
The replays follow the flight the of ball. If you look closely enough, you'll even see it spin.

PlayStation.2

FIFA 2001 looks the business as
well as playing excellently.
7/10 P2

We've seen the future and it's
made of frozen water. Every
PS2 needs this game. Blinding!
9/10 Official Playstation

A comprehensive and exciting
F1 simulator - plenty of options here
for F1 petrolheads.
4/5 The Player

As far as team based shooting games
go X-Squad has tons to offer and
should make the trigger happy
glad to be alive.
Station 2

With a flurry of head punches and
follow-up body blows, Knockout
Kings 2001 is truly a heavyweight
boxing game.
Official Playstation 2

Takes strategy gaming to an
epic new level.
90% PSi2

RICHARD DARLING

"Technology never stops. People will design integrated circuits with fewer spaces between the tracks and they'll get faster, but that doesn't make them better."

As creative director of the Codemasters empire, Richard Darling is one of Britain's keenest game-brains. Weaned on the first, mid-Eighties wave of home systems, he's seen the notoriously knotty concept of 'gameplay' evolve from crude Commodore VIC-20 stick figures to the lavish hyperrealism of Lara Croft. And now, with the titanic processing poke of PS2, he thinks that game design is finally ready to push on to the next level...

BACK IN THE HEYDAY OF 'HOME COMPUTING' when games were screech 'loaded' from cassette and an inscrutable boffin called Clive Sinclair was cast as our very own Bill Gates, Richard Darling and brother David were living in Canada. Over there, folks preferred the instant hit of the first proper home console – the Atari 2600, with its springy rubber joysticks and the impossible sci-fi glamour of slot-and-go cartridges like *Asteroids, Berzerk, Crystal Castles* and *Night Driver*.

The Darlings duly misspent much of their youth before moving back to England. Here existed a more DIY-oriented computer culture, where the programmable Sinclair and Commodore machines had spawned a wave of entrepreneurs, who pored over their 'machine code' textbooks in musky bedrooms. Inspired by the intuitive, pick-up and play design of the Atari games, the Darling brothers followed the usual path of coding their own and selling via mail order and low-budget distribution.

In 1986, they set up Codemasters – a catch-all programming and publishing outfit. Now 14 years later, its games have spent close to a thousand weeks at number one in the UK charts, with the two key series, *Micro Machines* and *Colin McRae Rally*, representing ideal opposites of pure, instant gameplay and sophisticated sports sim. →

How has the industry changed since you started Codemasters?

Codemasters started in 1986, which was the time of Spectrum, Amstrad, Commodore 64... We were just starting to get the 16 bit Atari ST and Amiga. The industry was on an entirely different scale – far, far fewer people involved in game development and publishing. Before we started the company, David and I had been developing games for a few years as freelance programmers, sending them around various publishing companies. The first games we released for the 8 bit formats took, typically, three or four months to create by one or two people – a programmer and an artist. The scale has grown and grown, so that now, with the next Colin McRae Rally game, we have a team of 45 people working over an 18-month period.

Were your initial ideas based on more immediate thoughts of the kind of games you wanted to play and produce, or was there more of a long-term business spark?

It's hard to characterise it that way. The atmosphere was so completely different. Gaming was seen as similar to yo-yos or hula-hoops or Pokémon or something – in that it would have a profitable, faddy burst and then fade away. It certainly wasn't seen as much of an 'industry'. But, despite that kind of popular opinion, we genuinely felt that it was a serious entertainment media with plenty of long-term potential – but certainly not on the scale that it has been.

Which games were your key inspiration – the ones that completely hooked you, or made you think that you could do better?

It would have to be arcade games, because at that time, the machines that were going into arcade cabinets were so much more powerful than anything you could play at home. Now, of course, it's pretty much synchronised. But we were always impressed with the kind of relationship that could be built up with certain games – Track & Field, Space Invaders, Galaxian... At the time we lived in Canada, we were around 12 or 13, and we never really felt a sense of videogames being anything 'new' or revolutionary, they were just one of our favourite ways of filling leisure time. Then, when we moved back to England, we bought a computer – a Commodore VIC-20 – and that was the spark.

We enjoyed playing the games, but because there weren't really that many available, we wanted to learn how to make our own. There was a lot of media fuss at the time about 'celebrity' programmers – Matthew Smith, who wrote Manic Miner, and Eugene Evans at Imagine – but we were part of the second wave – still at school, writing games and selling them through mail order. Just happily plugging away in the background.

As Codemasters has grown, have you managed to stay reasonably close to the creative side of game producing?

It depends on the game. We have some games like the LMA Manager series, where my involvement is small, because we have very good writers and producers who know football far better than I do. When I get more closely involved with a game, I try to keep it to areas where I'm sure I can make a difference. With TOCA World Touring Cars, I had regular meetings with the team, where we usually agreed on how to build on the good aspects and tweak some of the weaker ones – I

No, not another Darling brother, but a Micro Maniac from one of Codies' most popular franchises.

remember playing the game and being impressed with the handling, but feeling that there needed to be more feedback to make the player aware that they were about to slide. I spent a lot of time on the detail. I also have to try very hard to make sure that I play enough of other peoples' games. I was recently playing Smuggler's Run, which, despite the lukewarm reviews, I enjoyed immensely.

You've said that the increased excitement that can be built into PS2 games will be a big advance. Do you think that PS2 will lead the way for a long time to come?

The extra horsepower of PS2 has allowed us to do more and I hope that people will be pleasantly surprised when they see the games we're producing for it. But, technology never stops. People will design integrated circuits with fewer spaces between the tracks and they'll get faster and faster, but that doesn't necessarily make the games any better. The basic benefit to the games, with the machines getting faster, is a curve that's eventually going to level off and it'll have to be a case of diminishing returns at some point. I think PS2 has accelerated game development, because the designers have hardly any small technical obstacles to worry about. Now they can concentrate on letting their imaginations run wild. In a racing game, we don't have to worry about frame rates, because it's going to be 60 fps. No problem. No need to debate it.

What sort of things has PlayStation 2 allowed you to achieve, that you were unable to do with the PSone?

With the original PlayStation, we had to be really

MASTERS AT WORK

The PSone was a particularly fruitful format for Codemasters, with the company developing a number of truly top quality games and then turning them into successful franchises. An LMA Manager game – with online capabilities – has been confirmed for PS2, as new next-gen versions of Micro Maniacs and Colin McRae Rally. Expect an announcement on TOCA World Touring Cars to follow shortly.
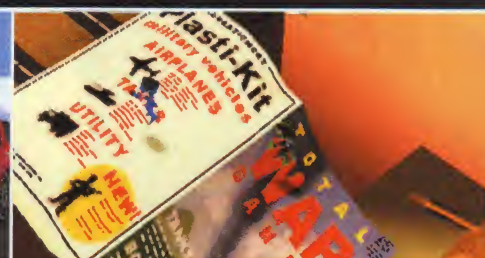
Clockwise from top left: LMA Manager, TOCA World Touring Cars, Micro Maniacs and Colin McRae Rally.

clever behind the scenes. In *World Touring Cars*, we were really pleased with the gameplay and how it gives all the right impressions to the player, but there's a lot of trickery involved just out of shot. For example, cars that are very close to you are working at the same physics model to your own car, but as they get further away, their physics gets more and more simplistic.

Now, with the extra power of PS2, we can just let every car work to the same system, and we don't have to work so hard to make the game seem realistic, because it is realistic. And that time saved can then be redirected towards more subjective issues like increasing the complexity of the AI – which, in turn, leads to a more involving experience for the player. A lot of 3D PSone games survive on this kind of trickery and, although it was a huge leap forward at the time, it's now five-years old. It's time to move on.

The *Music* and *Music 2000* titles were a big success for Codemasters. How are you translating the concept onto PS2?
Well, *MTV Music Generator* is an interesting one, because the immediate thought is, how does the PS2's extra processing power – particularly graphically – help a game which doesn't really require any? But, as we've worked through the project, we've realised that it isn't just about polygon rate. The much bigger system and storage memories make a huge difference, because you're not limited in the amount of samples you can put onto the disc. When you're editing your tunes, you can load up lots of different samples into memory and, via a palette system, have access to a multitude of samples at any one time. With the

PSone version, there were loading delays and one at a time samples. Again, it's much easier to dismiss those annoying technical issues and just get on with creating a more powerful and direct piece of software. [For more on *MTV Music Generator* see page 92.]

With PS2 racing games already starting to pile up, the PS2 version of *Colin McRae Rally* has a bit of a rival, in Evolution's *World Racing Cars*...
It is a rival, in the sense that it's trying to do a very similar thing. We're just making sure that we're a step ahead. What we're doing with the next version of the game is actually quite different – it's not just going to be more tracks and more cars. It's more of a conceptual update, because the role of the player will be more central to the game – a kind of 'Career mode' feel. We want to push it forward, so it's more than just a race or a question of basic driving skills. We want the player to feel more immersed in the game, and there are going to be more reasons than just 'seeing' the next track to compel you to progress through it.

How will broadband technology affect the way games are played – and designed?
I think that a lot of new technologies ultimately fail to deliver their promise, but broadband is one which has colossal potential. In any game where you're competing against a bunch of other entities, in most cases, it's much better for those entities to be real people, rather than computer controlled AI characters. Broadband is the technology which can really push that concept forward and unlock whole new areas of gaming which, at the moment, are beyond us. →

//The next version of
Colin McRae Rally is
quite different. It's more
of a conceptual update//

PAST MASTERS

Codemasters was created in 1986 and made a name for itself by producing exciting new titles for the Spectrum and Commodore 64 machines. The radical *BMX Simulator* (below right) was its first title, followed by the many platforming adventures of an egg named *Dizzy* (bottom). *CJ's Elephant Antics* (below left) in 1991 was part of the move to Amiga and Atari ST, while the first *Micro Machines* game (below middle) achieved fame on the NES in 1993.

→ **In a practical sense how easily do you see broadband being integrated?**

In terms of accessibility, I'm a little more doubtful. We now have copper wire telephones in our houses, but that's taken a long while, and the kind of infrastructure that can reach every house in the land is going to take even longer. It's fine with satellites, because that's just one-way broadcasting. But two-way communication which involves people digging up streets is more complicated. If as I read recently, they're expecting only 20% of UK households to have broadband internet access by 2005, then we do seem quite a way away from a really radical mainstream step-up. So in the meantime, it's a case of game designers finding clever ways to optimise good old modem technology – to lay the broadband groundwork. We want some of our games to support PS2 online multiplayer play, but via USB modem. And if broadband takes hold quicker than we expect, then it'll simply mean that those games will be able to accommodate more players.

How do you see the state of the industry at the moment – particularly in terms of game design?

Most of the media seem to agree that, because of the size of the game publishers now, they have to be selective about which projects to back, which naturally leads to a lot of repetition of winning formulas and sequels. But it's easy to lose sight of the sheer quality of most of the games out there. If you were to take a random new release and compare it to a four- or five-year-old game, the difference would be astounding. Not just technology-wise, but in the all-important subtleties – the production values, polish, longevity, loading times. I think we've made a lot of progress, and even if a game is 'about' something which you've seen before, it has to take those factors into account more than was necessary a few years ago. And 'new' game types do emerge occasionally. They tend to be less obsessed with an all-new concept for control or look or whatever, and more

based on exciting the player by allowing him access to a particular role that he hasn't experienced before. A couple of years ago, *Driver* came from nowhere. And, although it was pretty much recognisable as a driving game, it was the role – as a getaway driver – that was new and carried its success.

When ideas are getting a little stale in any field, there's a tendency to look back to simpler times to freshen things up. Which old school games do you think might be ripe for updating?

There are definitely a lot of older games which have been left behind, but have the kind of ideas and gameplay mechanics which could be extrapolated into modern gaming. So, yes. I think there is so much emphasis on looking to the future that we forget that there's often a lot to learn from the past. A game like *Skool Daze* [ZX Spectrum game, where you play a wily youth scampering around a bustling Comprehensive] is a good example, because there are a few aspects of the way that the game works that we're applying to a new game we're working on – a *Colditz*-style prisoner-of-war game. In *Skool Daze*, your character is in a set environment and he has to achieve certain tasks, while avoiding teachers – which is an interesting stealth element. There's also the added dimension of a structure to each day – where you're supposed to be in certain places at certain times. In-between, provided you're not spotted by the guards, you're free to sneak around completing missions.

The past icon of Codemasters was the decidedly 8 bit egg named *Dizzy*. Do you crave a new 21st Century mascot that might capture the imagination and cross over to the mainstream, like Lara Croft has?

Well, *Tomb Raider* was an example of a particular type of game where an entirely new character was created, and it was a combination of being a good character at the right time in the right state of the marketplace, and a well-produced, well-marketed game. With a lot of our resources being directed towards endorsement and licensing, it's tempting to think that we should be coming up with more exclusively in-house ideas like that. But I think it's an expensive, high-risk process. You could go through it 20 times and still not succeed. With regards to a particular character, you're also talking about a game that wouldn't come out for around two years and it's almost impossible to predict the state of the gaming culture in two years' time. □

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name: Richard Darling
Nationality: British
Date of birth: 9/12/67
Birthplace: Sydney, Australia

1984-5 Started writing games with brother David.
1986 Ended distribution deal with Mastertronic and formed Codemasters.
1986-1996 ZX Spectrum/Commodore 64/Amiga/Atari ST/16-bit consoles
 Games include *Dizzy*, *BMX Simulator*, *Stunt Man Seymour*, *CJ's Elephant Antics*, *Bubble Dizzy*, *Pete Sampras Tennis*.
1996 *Micro Machines V3* (PSone)
1997 *TOCA Touring Car Championship* (PSone)
1998 *Colin McRae Rally*, *Music* (PSone)
 Codemasters voted 'Publisher Of The Year' by *Edge* magazine.
1999 *LMA Manager*, *Micro Maniacs* (PSone)
2000 *Colin McRae Rally 2.0*, *Music 2000*, *TOCA World Touring Cars* (PSone)
 Codemasters awarded Queen's Award For Enterprise.

Hobbies: "What are these? You need spare time to have hobbies..."
Favourite games: Currently, *Smuggler's Run*.
Favourite bands: The radio.
Favourite books/authors: Discworld series, Terry Pratchett; *A Brief History Of Time*, Stephen Hawking; *The Language Of The Genes* and *Almost Like A Whale*, Steve Jones.

He doesn't have time for hobbies, Darling.

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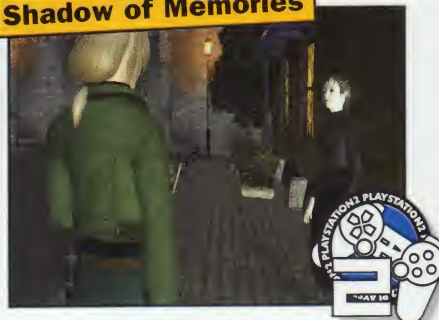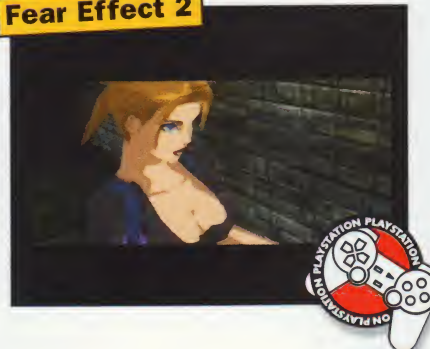
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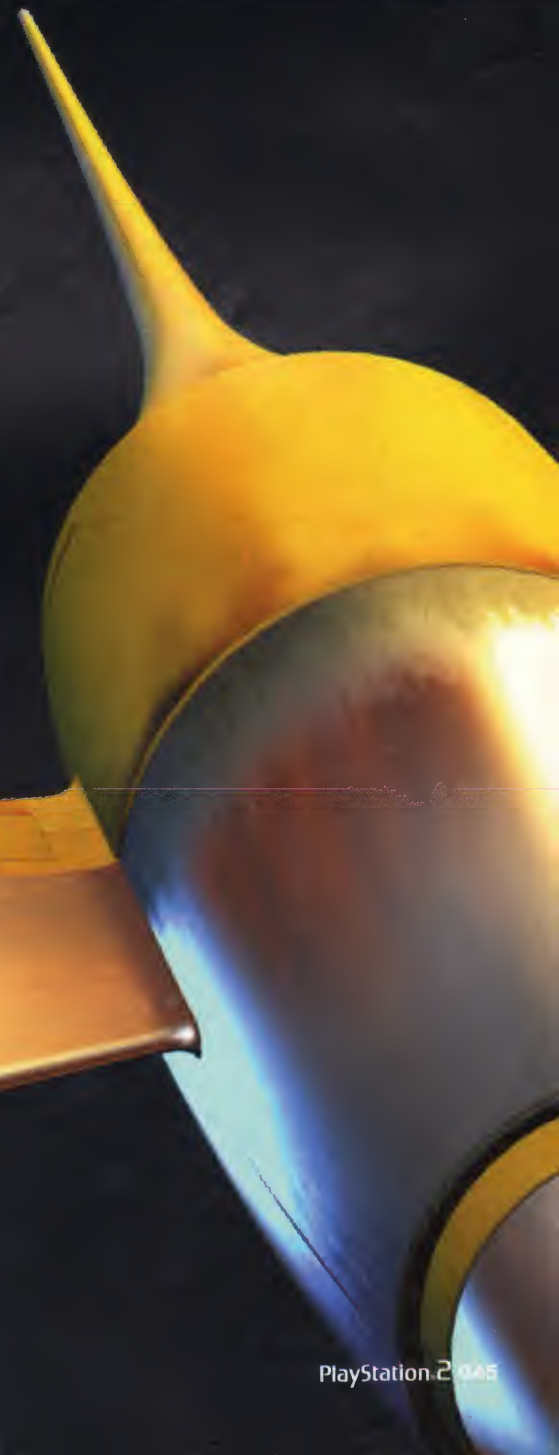
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SPY

EDITED BY JAMIE SEFTON

PROCURING INFORMATION FROM SQUARE Japan about the upcoming *Final Fantasy* RPGs is often more difficult than completing the 30 million-selling series itself. However, *OPS2* has garnered enough hit points and prised open the treasure chest just long enough to get our hands on a smart bundle of screenshots and essential news on the next three – yes *three* – FF spectaculars on PlayStation 2.

The images here and over the page have been designed by character artist Tetsuya Nomura, and are from *Final Fantasy X*. Apart from the obvious hi-res artwork, they all show actual in-game gameplay. The two main 17-year-old protagonists displayed in *OPS2* for the first time are boisterous hero Tidus and plucky heroine Yuna who both live in a post-apocalyptic world consumed by water, which it has to be said, sounds pretty similar to a certain Kevin Costner flick.

According to Square promotional blurb, Tidus is an "optimistic, unfaltering sportsman with a will to win. He is a competitor in the underwater sport Blitzball." Blitzball is a hybrid sport that mixes various types of ball games and will feature heavily throughout *FFX*, appearing in the plot and available to play separately as a mini-game. Yuna meanwhile is "a Summoner, daughter to High Summoner Braska. A fierce determination shines deep within her eyes." With the blood of a famous family coursing through her veins, Yuna will be able to summon powerful Guardian Forces to use in the battles against Ryugo – *FFX*'s dark sorcerer, terrifying despot and all-round bad guy.

The battle system has been revamped for the PlayStation 2, although many familiar elements such as the 'Mickey Mouse glove' cursor on the menu screens, ⊡

Water sports enthusiast Tidus takes to the waves of *Final Fantasy X*.

LET ME BE YOUR FANTASY

Square reveals more details on *Final Fantasy X, XI* and *XII*.

FFX creates an amazing living world that characters can fully explore in spectacular 3D.

BREAKING LANGUAGE BARRIERS
How can gamers in different countries talk to each other?

The most obvious problem that PS2 gamers could have with an online *FFXI* is how to converse with other RPG nuts around the world. Obviously you could decide to play on servers dedicated to English-speaking gamers, but where's the fun in that? A true global community, where users from Japan, Britain, Brazil or anywhere could all take part in a *FF* adventure together would be much more immersing. This is very much Square's aim with PlayOnline and the company has suggested that they wish to employ a similar system to the one used in Sega's *Phantasy Star Online*.

It uses three systems allowing gamers to communicate with each other: typing in their own language, a 'Word Select' technique or graphic symbols. The first technique is self-explanatory but the other two systems are ingenious in their simplicity. Word Select involves players choosing from a menu of various themed phrases such as "Shall I join in" and "I will cast spells on you!" which will automatically translate into whatever language other players are using. You can also create your own question or phrase using individual sets of words if you prefer. Secondly Symbols like smiley faces, thumbs up and similar universal language expressions can be used to convey a certain message to gamers. Players can design their own symbols and combine them with question marks, lightbulbs, music notes and hundreds of other doodles to get their message across.

SAY WHAT?
OPS2 gleans more info on FFX.

Square's promotional material for *FFX* provides a set of nonsense phrases and quotes that hint at story lines and action to come in the new RPG adventure. The 'Sin' that is constantly referred to in the game isn't a character as such, it's a dark presence that manifests itself in volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and other calamitous natural disasters...

☐ "They say your head gets all funny when Sin is near. Maybe what you saw was some kind of dream?"

☐ "Our world is crying."

☐ "I will defeat Sin. I must."

☐ "Sin – a trespasser, a scourge upon our land. It falls only to rise again, bringing chaos and destruction."

☐ "It's tough when your father is famous."

☐ "Only the Summoners' 'Last Summoning' can defeat Sin."

☐ "Trying to escape from reality... Trying and failing."

Answers on a postcard to OPS2 at the usual address.

//A facial motion system creates emotional expressions on characters' faces in real-time//

specialised limit breaks and random attacks have returned. A three-character arrangement for battles has been decided upon, with events taking place in the same environment used in the main exploration mode to avoid extended loading times. Players will be able to call on the strengths and abilities of the trio of characters during a fight and Square has hinted that extra firepower can be called upon from characters not even in a currently chosen party. Experience points will concentrate on improving a character's equipment and skill rather than just advancing levels.

Graphics in *FFX* have taken a sizeable leap in quality and ambition. The series is now in full 3D, allowing the player to move their smoothly animated character freely around a world containing massive outdoor environments with distant snow-capped mountains and beautifully realised fortresses containing ornately decorated columns and subtle flickering torches. Square has also introduced actor voiceovers to enhance the narrative and a unique 'facial motion system' creates believable and emotional expressions on characters' faces in real-time.

Other series favourites making a reappearance are those cheeky yellow Chocobos, a giant airship armed with a lethal cannon and of course, the character of Cid – without whom all *Final Fantasy* adventures would be incomplete. *FFX* is scheduled for a summer release in Japan on DVD-ROM with a UK conversion *hopefully* in time for Christmas.

Meanwhile details of the online RPG *FFXI* have emerged (see Breaking Language Barriers) plus confirmation of *FFXII* that will return to the format of a mainly offline gaming experience. Finally, the classic PSone adventures *FFVII*, *FFVIII* and *FFIX* are currently being 'remade' for PlayStation 2 with improved graphics, faster loading times and high quality DVD sound – although Square fans will have to buy each disc separately. OPS2 will splash the latest news on all things *Final Fantasy* (including forthcoming movie blockbuster, *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*) across these pages as soon as we get it. ☐ JS

Sophisticated facial motion technology allows characters to express more emotion.

Yuna – a determined young lady.

ユウナ：あのさ……
ガード お願いしちゃダメかな?

始まりは『シン』だ
だからもう一度『シン』に会えば…

SEGA ON PS2

It's official – the Japanese games giant inks deal with Sony.

IN A MOVE that has rocked the videogames industry, Sega is to cease production of the Dreamcast hardware in March to concentrate on developing games. As revealed in last month's OPS2, the decision has been mooted in industry circles for the past 12 months, but despite previous strong denials from Sega, the company has indeed signed a deal with SCE and other software publishers to produce PS2 versions of its world-renowned games. "Our new strategy will allow us to put our software content across a variety of platforms, keeping Sega at the forefront of gaming," commented Sega Europe's Chief Operating Officer Kazutoshi Miyake. Meanwhile, David Wilson, Head of PR at SCE (UK) said, "We're proud to have some of Sega's biggest titles on PS2 and believe this offers PS2 players an even wider choice of top quality titles."

Acclaim is the first third-party publisher to bring Sega games to Sony's machine, with three major launches: cabbie-sim Crazy Taxi out on 26 April, undead blaster Zombie Revenge (June) and meaty truck-a-thon 18 Wheeler (August). Other Sega titles definitely making their way to PS2 include disco dancer Space Channel 5 (and its sequel), Japanese 'Let's Make A…' sports franchise Tsukurou!, RPG series Sakura Taisen and in a major coup, the brand new Virtua Fighter 4, produced by Shenmue creator Yu Suzuki.

Sega has also announced that its middleware tools known as Ninja and Shinobi have been adapted for PlayStation 2, allowing easy conversions of any existing Dreamcast titles to Sony's machine. OPS2 believes that this will result in lucky PS2 owners being able to play such Sega mainstays as Jet Set Radio, Ferrari F355 Challenge and of course, Sonic Adventure with Sega needing to quickly re-establish its flagship game icon on the leading next-gen hardware.

As for online gaming, SCE is believed to be working with Sega on a joint strategy, with the latter's experience in this field with titles such as Phantasy Star Online, invaluable for ensuring a smooth PS2 Hard Disk Drive/Broadband expansion launch this year. Expect more news next month. ☐ **JS**

Yu Suzuki's new Virtua Fighter 4 is a real coup for the PS2.
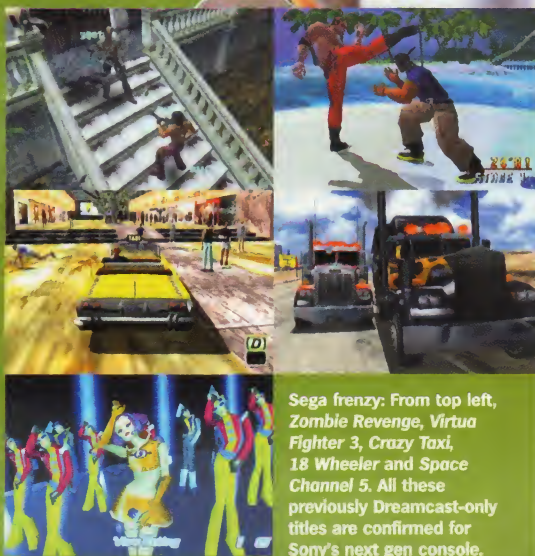
Sega frenzy: From top left, Zombie Revenge, Virtua Fighter 3, Crazy Taxi, 18 Wheeler and Space Channel 5. All these previously Dreamcast-only titles are confirmed for Sony's next gen console.

TRIBAL TROUBLE

Destroy entire populations in *Giants: Citizen Kabuto*.

CYNICS WHO HAVE been spouting on about the depressing number of PlayStation 2 sequels such as *Ridge Racer V* and *Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec*, no longer have a gnarled, bitter leg to stand on. Konami's *Shadow Of Memories*, Eidos's *Project Eden* and THQ's *Red Faction* are all highly original PS2 titles possessing imaginative settings and some inventive gameplay.

Interplay's *Giants: Citizen Kabuto* is another forthcoming PS2 game that defies convention, by offering a bizarre mixture of real-time strategy, action adventure, racer and first-person shooter with outlandish characters and a twisted British sense of humour.

Developed by ex-Shiny (*MDK*, *Sacrifice*) coder Planet Moon, *Giants'* Story mode gives players the opportunity to control three very different races fighting for supremacy on a series of 16 alien islands. The trio of tribes include gung-ho Cockney space marines the Meccs, spell-casting nude water-babes the Sea Reapers and Kabuto, the lone giant who can lay up to four eggs that hatch into destructive 'mini-me' versions of himself. Players progress by defeating other races and completing objectives with the help of hyper-intelligent native islanders called Smarties, who build bases, construct weapons and teach magic spells.

Digital Mayhem is the team currently converting *Giants* to PS2 and Shawn Jacoby, producer at Interplay claims the game, will have, "All the exciting levels of the PC incarnation and the ability to save the game throughout the level." There'll be 45 missions and an advanced organic graphics engine that renders amazing particle effects, detailed character animation and a huge draw distance. *Giants* has elements of strategy with extended bloody battles, but Digital Mayhem will ensure the PS2 game retains an arcade 'feel', with commands and characters controlled via the Dual Shock 2.

With *Giants: Citizen Kabuto*, Interplay has the makings of a stunning title, tentatively scheduled for release in May. ☐ **JS**

Completely in-the-buff, Sea Reaper Delphi is one of the titillating stars of Giants.

Who you lookin' at? A too-close-for-comfort view of an evil Sauran.
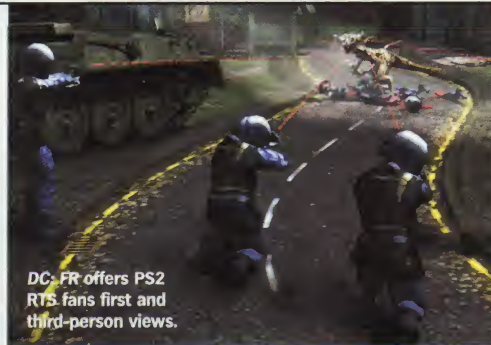
DC: FR offers PS2 RTS fans first and third-person views.

BATTLEFIELD EARTH

Liberate the planet in Mythos Games' stunning *Dreamland Chronicles: Freedom Ridge*.

IT IS THE YEAR 2003 and our beloved Earth has been utterly devastated by a marauding race of terrifying lizard-like aliens known as the Saurans. The surviving population has been herded into nine small reservations, awaiting an uncertain future as the ruthless invasion fleet starts to colonise the planet. However, a small band of resistance fighters known as the Terran Liberation Army stumble upon a strange alien artefact in Area 51 – or 'Dreamland', as it's now known – that just may hold the key to defeating the Sauran menace...

This is the premise for *Dreamland Chronicles: Freedom Ridge*, a sophisticated PS2 real-time strategy title from developer Mythos Games, who produced the classic PC title *UFO: Enemy Unknown* (AKA *X-Com*) in 1994. Julian Gollop, long-time programmer and games designer spoke exclusively to *OPS2* about this exciting new project. "It's going to be a unique game for PS2 owners –

lots of strategy and tactics, an element of RPG and great graphics. It'll have bags of atmosphere, with cinematic views of the action, first-person and third-person views."

Gollop is especially pleased with the way that the team is handling the turn-based combat system, which is being designed specifically for Dual Shock 2 – no keyboard or mouse will be needed. "It's largely controlled from the first-person view of the soldier, so that line of fire can be judged more accurately. The player will control human troops, alien allies and several types of robots and the part of the body hit by a weapon is very significant. It'll be possible to blow off arms, legs, tentacles and heads."

A large variety of weapons and special equipment such as tractor beams will feature in *DC: FR*, as well as the chance to control specialist alien technology. "There are many vehicle types, ranging from the mundane, such as Chinook or F-16, to the

huge alien battleships. Players can capture alien equipment, and manufacture new equipment based on the alien technology," says Gollop.

Mythos has created a brand new 128 bit graphics engine that allows destructible scenery – as in the upcoming Volition game *Red Faction* (see page 58) – plus realistic level designs in wildly different indoor and outdoor environments. With intelligent AI that adapts as the player gets better and a host of multiplayer options, *Dreamland Chronicles: Freedom Ridge* screams originality among the current collection of driving and beat-'em-up clones. A publisher for the game is to be confirmed very soon and Mythos hopes that PS2 owners will be able to take on the Sauran empire around Christmas this year. ☐ **JS**

If you want to know more log on to www.mythosgames.com

AUTO-DESTRUCTION

The makers of *SSX* deliver smashing PS2 racer, *Rumble Racing*.

THERE'S NO DOUBT that *SSX* has been a runaway success on PlayStation 2, topping the charts with its stunning combination of intuitive controls, addictive gameplay and sublime next-gen graphics. Great news then that newly-established 'cool' publisher offshoot EA Sports Big is developing a manic, thrills 'n' spills driving title called *Rumble Racing*.

"It's going to be the fastest racing game on the PlayStation 2," revealed Executive Producer David DeMartini to *OPS2*. "PS2 owners will be hard pressed to find a game that offers so much – great visual and sound effects, a huge variety of courses, loop-the-loops, short cuts, *SSX*-like stunts and much, much more." EA has had success in the past with its *NASCAR* and *Need For Speed* franchises, but *Rumble Racing* is a brand new project for the California-based games giant.

These exclusive screenshots reveal a racer that throws you behind the wheel of over 20 ridiculously souped-up vehicles, including trucks, jet cars, minivans and sports cars. Players career at breakneck speeds around 14 twisty-turny tracks taking in beaches, mountains and cities, with a huge array of wild and wacky power-ups such as 'Sonic Boom' and 'Bad Fuel' thrown into the mix. A two-player option is included, as well as TV-style replays to capture all the spectacular crashes, singed metal and ear-splitting explosions.

EA Sports Big is hoping this will do for racers what *SSX* did for snowboarding, promising fast loading times and smooth frame rates in addition to the accelerated stunt-filled mayhem. *Rumble Racing* is currently scheduled for a May 2001 release – *OPS2* can't wait. ☐ **JS**

Big fun: *Rumble Racing* is spread across six distinct game worlds.

Hot dog: Roofus goes on the prowl for his precious puppies.

SUPER FURRY ANIMALS

Enjoy a menagerie of mayhem with the *Fur Fighters*. Just remember – don't call them 'cute'...

CATS LETTING FLY with a barrage of machine gun bullets? Dogs stomping around with an outsized rocket launcher? Encouraging a cuddly creature to wield a weapon of destruction isn't exactly going to endear you with the RSPCA, but people have to respect the rights of animals to bear arms. *Fur Fighters* on Dreamcast was one of the most enjoyable and downright silly videogames to surface in 2000 – a sumptuous 3D cartoon adventure with an admirable mix of puzzle-solving, platforming and gun-totting featuring a lovable collection of wide-eyed cutesy animals armed to the teeth with an arsenal of heavy weaponry.

Now developer Bizarre Creations has used all the power of PlayStation 2 to breed an altogether more advanced beast that retains all the winning elements of the original, with dozens of major graphics and gameplay enhancements. *Fur Fighters* stars six characters: Roofus the dog, Juliette the cat, Rico the

Penguin, Bungalow the Kangaroo, Tweak the Dragon and Chang the Firefox. Each animal activist has had their tiny offspring kidnapped by the evil General Viggo, a giant cat overlord with a small human curled up on his lap in a ridiculous play on the classic Bond villain. The Fur Fighters must utilise their individual strengths – such as Juliette's ability to claw up walls – in order to rescue their various litters and defeat Viggo.

From these stunning screenshots – exclusive to *OPS2* – you can see that *Fur Fighters* has been given an ultra-modern cel-shaded look, oodles of extra levels and baddies,

//People need to learn to respect the rights of small animals to bear arms//

mini-games, platforming puzzles and real speech. AI has been given a significant boost, so enemies will now react more realistically, running away if you have a bigger weapon or having angry punch-ups if a stray shot accidentally hits them. The *Metal Gear*-style cardboard box makes a welcome return as well as a new array of power-ups and interactive environments, such as the violent urban sprawl of New Quack City and an extremely disorientating Space Station. Finally, if you fancy knocking the stuffing out of a furry friend, you can join in an extreme four-player deathmatch.

The characters may seem sweet and the visuals could put Disney in the shade, but *Fur Fighters* is a wolf in sheep's clothing, defying its cartoon appearance to deliver a mean action title that has serious attitude. *OPS2* will bring you all latest info on Acclaim and Bizarre Creations' manic masterpiece until the game is released into the wild next September. ☐ **JS**

NICE BUT NAUGHTY
Not so friendly fur balls...

Bizarre Creations is keen to stress that the PS2 version of *Fur Fighters* is much less of a 'cute' game than the Dreamcast original. The team has spent many months redesigning the next-gen platformer to appeal to all kinds of gamers, with the obvious improvement being the cool 'cel-shaded' appearance of the graphics, reminiscent of Sega's *Jet Set Radio* or the work of *OPS2*'s very own bonkers illustrator, Mr Jago. Roofus the dog may sound like the kind of animal you'd lovingly hold in your arms, but beware – this canine is more likely to bite off chunks of your face than chase a rubber ball in the park.

These exclusive PS2 screens reveal a cool cel-shaded look.

(Left) Olympic boxing champ Audley Harrison.
(Centre) Playing the game.
(Right) Ali's birthday cake.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ROB SCOTT

GAME, WHAT GAME?

Knockout Kings 2001 should have been the star, but it was upstaged by a bigger one...

MUHUMMAD ALI, undoubtedly the most famous boxer the world has ever known, celebrated his 59th birthday in London this year – at the launch of EA Sports' new PS2 boxing title *Knockout Kings 2001*.

With the PS2 brand image now destined for universal living room status, publishers with huge amounts of money at their disposal, such as EA are setting the trend for extravagant game launches complete with celebrity appearances. Though they'll need to be careful that, as this event proved, the celebrity doesn't overshadow the product.

At the venue – mega-club Sound, on Leicester Square – a multitude of *Knockout Kings 2001* game pods and demo screens were set up, while in the background some filling-dislodging hip-hop boomed out of the sound system. But for all of the game's

undeniably stunning graphics, gameplay and photo-realistic flair, the only real murmur among the assembled tabloid hacks, photographers and specialist press was for Ali. CG images of Lewis and Ali – stars of the game – were not enough to sate their need to see the heroes in the flesh. When he eventually arrived, flanked by minders, managers and Lennox Lewis, a sudden flurry of activity erupted, with applause crackling on until both current and all-time champ were sat in a boxing ring in the centre of the club stage.

The EA Sports MC gave his spiel on the publisher's relationship with the boxers and on making the statement, "We're here to talk about *Knockout Kings 2001*," asked for any questions. Few were aimed at EA's showpiece, though Lewis was

surprisingly deft on game issues, particularly the method used for mapping his body onto the game character, which is according to him, very realistic.

Just as the press remembered that they were there for the launch of a boxing game, Ali stood up and, with Lennox's help, showed off a little close-up magic, that pleased the crowd. Soon after, a couple of hulking bouncers wheeled in a huge, boxing ring-shaped birthday cake, closely followed by Beverley Knight singing a ringing rendition of *Happy Birthday*.

After the great man left there wasn't much to keep the crowd from making a sharp exit, leaving the game playing in the background. The most telling moment of the day being Ali's sole utterance, "It's nice to know I'm still the greatest." Which in the context of this event is entirely true... ☐ AL

Ali and Lennox: the true gentlemen of the boxing world.

//Big publishers are setting the trend for extravagant game launches complete with celebrities//

It's a football game. But not as we know it.

A WHOLE NEW BALL GAME

Konami unveils its UK plans for the new PS2 *ISS*. And, yes, it's 'proper'.

FANTASTIC NEWS FOR fans of what many people believe to be the greatest football videogame in history – *ISS Pro Evolution 2* on PSone (reviewed on page 124). Konami has finally released information about the new PlayStation 2 version, which will first see the light of day as *Winning Eleven 5* at the end of March in Japan. In last month's *OPS2*, we revealed that Konami is launching *ESPN MLS ExtraTime* in the USA at the same time, but it transpires that this is yet another different version of the *ISS* series and basically a straight conversion by KCEA Honolulu of the latest PSone classic.

Confused? Well, the only fact you need to know is that the Japanese in-house developer at Konami, KCET, produce the best football games and *it* is making the next *ISS* title for the PlayStation 2.

Although EA Sports' *FIFA* franchise sells more copies, having superb presentation and more 'accessible' gameplay, footie fans appreciate the hardcore mechanics of the KCET *ISS* which reveals new tricks and tactical revelations months after you begin playing matches. *Winning Eleven 5* is a completely revamped game and has all the elements that followers of the series will love, but with a sparkling new graphics engine that delivers huge stadia packed with thousands of flag-waving supporters and stunning motion-captured players displaying detailed facial expressions.

AI has been tweaked for improved computer-controlled team-mates and the ball itself moves incredibly realistically, deflecting off players and needing silky skills by the gamer to control it and keep it in play. There are also more than 50 international teams, a World tournament mode and real player names and likenesses for authenticity.

The UK edition is currently being play-tested, but a Konami spokesperson has confirmed to *OPS2* that the latest and greatest *ISS Pro Evolution* will have the addition of UK club teams and is scheduled for an October kick-off. In the meantime look at these exclusive PS2 screenshots and get ready to 'believe in your dreams' all over again. ☐ **JS**

Could the new PS2 *ISS* by Konami finally challenge the dominant-but-inferior *FIFA* series?

NEWS OF THE WORLD
THIS MONTH: GERMANY
VIDEOGAMING ON A GLOBAL SCALE

With 70 million people living in Germany, approximately four million of them own PSones – that's 5.7% of the population. PS2 has sold over 100,000 units so far.

On launch day Germany had 70,000 units that sold out as soon as they hit the shelves, and since mid-January PS2s have been available for all who want them. A few teething troubles have been experienced with PS2 in Germany with people scratching their game discs by moving the unit while the discs are still spinning and DVD-fans complaining about the missing RGB output. As for games buying, players are sticking to PSone sequels – *Tekken*, *FIFA*, *Ridge Racer* – with *SSX* the only 'new' game to make it into the top three. ☐ **WOLFGANG SCHAEDLE**

Germany's Most Wanted PlayStation 2 games
1. SSX
2. Dead or Alive 2
3. Tekken Tag Tournament
4. FIFA 2001
5. F1 Championship Season 2001
6. Ridge Racer V
7. Kessen
8. X-Squad
9. Rayman Revolution
10. TimeSplitters

Chart source: *Media Control Germany* (22/01/01)

FIVE AMAZING FACTS ABOUT GERMANY

1. *LMA Manager* has never been released there. But even without a chance for virtual training, the German national side still manages to win the important football games against England.

2. A lot of people have never heard of Dreamcast – some even think it's a kind of PlayStation from Sega.

3. In the 1982 World Cup finals the West German side lost 2-1 to Algeria. The Algerian side were 1000-1 to win the trophy, with the Germans at 3-1.

4. Germans drink beer for breakfast, then get into their awfully fast BMWs and drive to work at 160mph – without losing their licences.

5. The famous Munich Oktoberfest beer extravaganza doesn't start in October, it actually begins in September.

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gallery
A quadruple helping of incoming PS2 goodies

KURI KURI MIX
Publisher: Empire
Release date: April

A Japanese platform puzzler starring a couple of inevitably cute cartoon characters called Chestnut and Cream. Over 50 levels and a four-player multiplayer mode.

KENGO
Publisher: Ubi Soft
Release date: April

Ex-Square coder delivers an honourable PS2 'update' of the classic *Bushido Blade*. The use of a life bar may frustrate purists, but *Kengo* should still deliver razor-sharp swordplay.

BLOODY ROAR 3
Publisher: Virgin
Release date: June

One of the first titles to appear on Sony's new coin-op format System 246 is up for a summer release on PS2. A beat-'em-up where players can transform into super-powerful animal fighters.
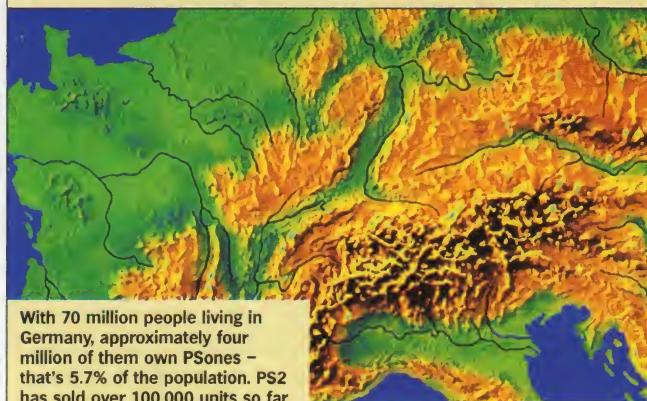
UEFA CHALLENGE
Publisher: Infogrames
Release date: June

From the maker of *UEFA Striker* on PSone comes a new footie title with the official stamp of approval. Features 40 stadia, 146 clubs and national teams, plus cutting-edge graphics featuring players 'talking' and realistic animated injuries. Ouch.

SPY

DEAD GOOD

Armageddon antics with the return of *Shadowman*.

SHADOWMAN: 2ECOND COMING is the exclusive PS2 sequel to the original adventure for the PSone. Starring ex-hitman Mike LeRoi, you have to pass between the real and dead worlds – with your alter ego Shadowman – to stop the annihilation of mankind by hellish monsters known as the Grigori.

Lead designers Jonny Heckley and Mat Ward explained to OPS2 the ideas behind this terrifying follow-up. "We're improving the expansive and atmospheric elements of the first game and combining that with a spectacular particle system for providing incredible weather, environmental and weapon effects," says Heckley. The pair are also playing with the PS2's Dolby Digital 5.1 3D sound, to provide "a sweeping soundscape of cinematic proportions, with an unsettling undertone of fear."

An overhauled combat system allows players to look around at the same time as blasting any evil scum back to the hell pit they oozed from. It will also be possible to pull off special stealth one-hit kills with access to an armoury of guns, voodoo magic and undead weapons including the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, which Heckley describes as "Satan's smart bomb." Shadowman is taken on a visceral journey through locations including black magic capital Louisiana, an icy Russian forest, an ancient fortress high up in the mountains of Iraq and the mysterious Isle of the Dead.

Shadowman: 2econd Coming has all the elements of a very chilling adventure, packed with fiendish foes, mind-bending puzzles, a well-stocked armoury and sound that will terrify. If the game delivers the superior experience that early demos have elicited, Acclaim should have a hit on their hands when *Shadowman* is resurrected on 31 August. □ JS

Shadowman silently stalks the PlayStation 2. Expect scenes from *The Book of Revelations* – nightmarish spirit worlds (left) and spooksome demons (right).

THE GRID #05: Which PS2 race games will get you all revved up?

	Racing where and in what?	What's the hook?	Boy racer or Sunday driver?	Pedal to the metal? Will it live up to expectations?	In the showroom, when?
GT3: A-Spec	This behemoth of a game can drive, slide, thrust and zoom itself just about anywhere it likes. And in what? Anything that's fast and has four wheels. The biggest driving event on any console ever.	Enticing leading car manufacturers by the garage full, featuring the most realistic handling ever, beautifully rendered cars, blistering AI and physics to die for.	Breakneck speeds and thrills combined with an obsession for precision make GT3: A-Spec the ultimate driving experience for anyone with the capacity to hold a joypad (or special GT wheel).	To ask whether the hype behind the game will live up to its performance is like asking whether Jordan sleeps on her back. Yes, then.	Unfortunately Yamauchi's masterpiece has skidded off the release schedule until May. In the meantime, enjoy the playable demo on this issue's cover disc.
WipEout Fusion	'The Future' or 2150 AD to be precise so the courses are now as we know them. You're racing in a sleek, single-seater craft that hovers just above the surface of the purpose-built circuits you're bombing around.	It's WipEout. On PS2. Don't you see? For those of you scratching your heads, WipEout was one of the games that made the reputation of the PSone. An immensely enjoyable futuristic techno-racer.	For obvious reasons WipEout Fusion isn't a sim, so casual racers will get as much out of it as the hardcore speed freaks. Tracks styled around roller coasters with loops, short cuts and no boring reality check.	With the game being built up from scratch, rather than existing PSone code with bolted-on playability, you can expect more than a lazy port up to next-gen status.	Hovering into view this September via SCEE.
Rally Circuits: Africa	Well, in this game's case it does exactly what it says on the box; race around lots of African rally circuits. Expect a lot of animals not normally seen outside of a zoo to be blocking the track.	Take on a variety of desert, town and dirt tracks from Cape Town to Cairo in rally cars constructed around a realistic physics engine. If you've played Rage's Wild Wild Racing, you'll know what that means.	Definitely one for the petrol heads out there. If the challenging surfaces don't trip you up, the changeable 'moods' of opponents might. Single race or championship, you're going to have to earn those victories.	If playability meets realism halfway then this could be very good indeed. It certainly looks the part already with impressive draw distances and superb lighting, showing off the beautiful locations to great effect.	Rage's latest racer will be throwing up dust clouds come late summer.
ATV Offroad Fury	No it's not a bizarre spin off from an old Associated Television programme from the Seventies, but an All Terrain Vehicle racer. As for the where, prepare to split your time evenly between the ground and the air.	Think of ATV Offroad Fury as Tony Hawk's with engines. Racing is the order of the day but the points really stack up as you become adept at performing airborne tricks and stunts as you go.	A bit of both. The fun-factor is to the fore, but with over 20 tracks, customisable bikes and the challenge of performing tricks while trying to beat the opposition to the finish line means this is no pushover.	Will the tricks blend well with the out-and-out racing? If they do SCEA could have a hit on its white-knuckled hands.	Crashing out of the SCEA showroom and flying over the neatly manicured lawns of suburbia in the summer. A UK release remains unconfirmed.
Star Wars: Super Bombad Racing	A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away. And you'll be at the helm of cute, cartoon versions of a gamut of Star Wars speeders, fighters and transporters.	Are you serious? It's the Star Wars universe interpreted in the medium of kart racer featuring the superdeformed anime heads of Messrs Maul, Skywalker, Binks and so on.	Definitely Sunday driver. This is for gamers who like racing with no sharp edges and a hefty dollop of wackiness.	Hard to tell. For some, cutting up Jar Jar Binks on Naboo is going to be a dream come true. For others Bombad is likely to be a Star Wars cash-in too far and no amount of crazy kart racing will redeem it.	Activision will enable you to Maul the opposition around May time.
Driving Emotion Type-S	Race around bizarre Japanese courses in cars such as Toyotas, Nissans and Hondas. These aren't your sporty models though. These are buckets complete with furry dice and dubious stains on the back seat.	It's completely uncontrollable. Well, it makes a change from all this 'brilliant handling' malarkey doesn't it? If you fancy your hand at steering two ton bricks around then it might appeal.	More a Sunday afternoon walk. An uphill waddle taken by an overweight, 20-a-day couch potato. A wheezing, inexcusable mess of a game with very little discernable gameplay. Apparently.	Heard very little about the game? That's because they don't want you to know about it. Likely to sink without a trace almost as soon as it appears on the shelves, but we've got the review on page 120.	It appeared on the shelves in February with no hype whatsoever. There's a reason for that.
Lotus Challenge	Race an Elise, an Elan, an Esprit or any other Lotus-made vehicle around a variety of tracks across Europe and England.	It's a Lotus themed game. Thankfully they're a pretty good make of car. Much better than the now-canned Trabant Challenge.	Definitely boy racer stuff. There isn't a car in here that doesn't scream, "Look at me, girls! I'm rich and I'm compensating for having an exceptionally small appendage!"	A slow burner. There has been a quiet anticipation surrounding the game and the developers seem quietly confident about the whole thing. It should cause a stir when it finally arrives.	Virgin Interactive reckon May this year. It should have everybody driving a Lotus – or at least wishing they could.
Concept Car Challenge	Drive around a variety of European cities in cars that never quite made it into production but once existed in the mind of genuine car designers. Says a lot for their quality doesn't it?	This is where car designers' imaginations were allowed to run wild, before discovering the vehicle wouldn't get out of the garage. But now they're resurrected in all the PS2's glory.	Boy racer. Activision's game is pure fiction and most of the cars are likely to kill you due to some fatal design flaw that got spotted on the real thing at the last minute.	It's too early for hype but whipping up a frenzy for fictional cars such as the Lamborghini Moustache or the Lotus Alan is hardly going to get the masses salivating is it?	Late this year from Activision. Or maybe not at all if form mirrors content. Ironic, non?

Edited by **Amos Wong**.

MECHA MAYHEM

Hideo Kojima's heavy metal action title *ZOE* comes full circle.

ZOE now has its own anime DVD.

ALTHOUGH KONAMI'S mecha-anime simulation *ZOE* was inspired by classic robot animation, the game has now spawned its own spin-off with a 45-minute anime DVD release titled, *ZOE 2167 Idolo*.

Taking place before the game's events, *2167 Idolo* depicts a power struggle between Mars colonists and the oppressive inhabitants of Earth. The colonists' only hope lies in the development of Orbital Frame weaponry, which has already caused loss of life. Born on Mars, protagonists Radam Levans and Viola Gune – two soldiers from the Bahrum resistance – have been transferred to the Orbital Frame Development Group as Frame Runners or more simply, pilots.

Only Radam is capable of piloting Idolo, which looks like a prototype of Orbital Frame

Jehuty from the game *ZOE*. The duo will have more than Orbital Frame testing on their hands though. News of the project has leaked to Earth and Colonel Barouz of the United Earth Army is hatching plans to steal the new weapon – by force if necessary.

The game mirrors the sprawling *Gundam* series, which also has spin-off anime and games from the viewpoint of the antagonists of the original TV series. Which is quite fitting, considering *2167 Idolo* is animated at Sunrise Studios – home of *Gundam*. There's also been rumblings lately of a *ZOE* TV series in the wake of *2167 Idolo*. Whether the series will get the green light, or indeed what it will be about remains to be seen. We'll keep you posted. Meanwhile, the *ZOE 2167 Idolo* DVD and video will hit the shops here on 1 March. ☐ **AW**

PREVIEW! PREVIEW!

PARA PARA PARADISE

Having trouble keeping up with the other 'dancers' at Japanese Para Para clubs? Fear not: Konami's latest game will put you on the fast track to becoming the dancing Queen, or King. Follow the screen prompts, wave your arms accordingly facing the special sensor, keep to the beat and look like an idiot to uninitiated friends. Out in arcades with a PS2 release confirmed in Japan, Bemani has just gone nuts.

Para Para music is like Steps. On helium. At 200bpm.

Super Fly Guy: a new Japanese RPG thrills sci-fi freaks.

BIG GAME!

SUPER HERO SAKUSEN: DAIDARU NO YABOU

Cousin of the *Super Robot Wars* series, this tactical RPG is like the Justice League of Japanese Rubber Suited Heroes. Members of the long-running *Ultraman*, *Space Detective*, *Kikaider* and *Kamen Rider* series join forces to combat evil and as with *Super Robot Wars*, they're all condensed into the 'superdeformed' style and look rather cute. It's a 'tokusatsu' (live action SFX show) fans' dream come true.

PS2 CHARTS

JAPANESE TOP 10

The Bouncer at number one, despite poor reviews.

1. **THE BOUNCER** (SQUARE)
2. **MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM** (BANDAI)
3. **HAJIME NO IPPO: VICTORIOUS BOXERS** (ESP)
4. **DOA2: HARDCORE** (TECMO)
5. **SPACE VENUS STARRING MORNING MUSUME** (SCEJ)
6. **7: THE CAVALRY OF MOLMORTH** (NAMCO)
7. **DARK CLOUD** (SCEJ)
8. **KENGO** (GENKI)
9. **JIKKYO POWERFUL PRO BASEBALL 7 SPECIAL EDITION** (KONAMI)
10. **MADDEN NFL SUPER BOWL 2001** (EA/SQUARE)

Chart source: Weekly Famitsu PS2 (29/1/2001)

GADGET SPOT!

IT'S A DOG'S LIFE

Afro Dog has arrived, apparently inspired by japanese teenagers' penchant for exotic hairstyles and colouring. In a stroke of genius, the psychedelic barnets of the soft toy are interchangeable with oodles of even more outlandish styles – cool or what? Better still are its equally odd friends: the slicked Greased Dog and the samurai topknot-sporting Tonosama Dog. Needless to say, keychains, stickers and mobile phone graphics pad out the 60-item onslaught.

Enough with Afro Dog, *OPS2* wants Mullet Cat.

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30 DAYS IN TOKYO

A MONTH IN THE LIFE OF *OPS2*'S OTHER MAN IN JAPAN, AMOS WONG

Day 1 (7 January): Get my mitts on a WonderBorg, Bandai's 'autonomous insect robot'. Switch it on and the bug promptly barges into walls and walks off ledges. So much for the autonomous bit. Turns out you must buy a WonderSwan to program its AI from scratch. Initial frustration (the English instruction leaflet leaves a lot to be desired) gives way to addiction as robot programming brings out latent geek qualities.

Day 8: Spot unusually long lines of people at electronic shops on Friday morning. The new model PS2 with DVD remote hits the streets today.

Happy PS2 shoppers on the hunt for a remote.
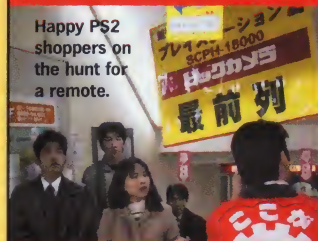
Day 9: Stumble across an *Ultraman* store during post-Christmas shopping. Hmm, I can really imagine a Japanese salaryman wearing the *Ultraman* tie and socks. Or maybe not. Amazingly, there's a store named 'Amo's Style': it sells ladies underwear. Maybe I'll apply for a second job there.

Day 22: Spend most of my pay on a Sony WEGA KV-28DA1 widescreen TV. Find out the next day my bank account isn't as healthy as I thought. Am almost broke for the next month and a half. But movies and games look and sound so much better.

Day 24: Checked out the Mad Lab horror house at Yokohama. You have to walk holding a fake candle though corridors with rather unimpressive screaming rubber zombies, a chap frying on an electric chair and a giant spider that drops from the ceiling. If you stick the candle in a socket afterwards you receive a certificate showing 'the percentage that you feel fearfully'. It says my greatest fear is not having any money. Fair enough..

Day 27: *Onimusha*'s star Takeshi Kaneshiro is staring at me at the train station. Well, a poster of his digitised face is. Demo discs are on rental at my local Tsutaya video store. It also scored a great rating in *Famitsu* recently. A hit is imminent. Bet he doesn't fear not having any money.

Videogames characters are megastars in Japan.

INVENTORY
Your one-stop guide to the PS2 power-ups.

#05: SNIPER RIFLE

So what's a sniper rifle then?
It's the weapon of choice to take out that enemy in the distance, or your mates in a multiplayer shoot-'em-up.

A handy killing machine then?
Yup. It's a high-powered rifle with a telescopic sight attached. You line up the crosshair with opponents head/crotch and KABOOM! They're deader than Dreamcast.

Okay, but what's a crosshair?
Its what you see when you look through the sight so that you can aim more accurately for headshots. Duh.

So why should I want one?
If you like getting into the thick of the action of *TimeSplitters* or *Unreal Tournament* then they're pretty much useless, but if you prefer the distant, sneakier approach you can take people out from rooftops or the other side of the arena. They'll never know what hit 'em.

Are they the business then?
As long as it's your eye looking down the sight rather than your butt appearing in it. Oh and you could always use the telescopic capability for voyeuristic means and look at naked ladies with it. Like *Silent Scope*. Ahem.

You'll even be able to drive down the shops, such is *Lotus Challenge's* versatility.

Are you ready to get behind the wheel of some classics?

LOTUS FLOWERING

Craftsmanship meets cutting-edge games development in Virgin's fast approaching *Lotus Challenge*.

RATHER THAN THE usual delays due to coding difficulties or publisher schedules, the reason for Virgin's new PS2 racer *Lotus Challenge* being postponed has been far more artistic. Lotus, Virgin and developer Kuju have been almost fanatically devoted to producing the most accurate videogame simulation of driving a Lotus car there has ever been.

"A lot of the team members have driven and been driven in different Lotus cars," says Ad Stevenson, Team Director of Kuju, "it helped a lot with getting the feeling of driving right. On a real road, no matter how recklessly you drive you'll never have a true feeling of racing." And the test driving has paid dividends, with Lotus singing the praises of development, and Gavan Kershaw, principal vehicle dynamics engineer claiming he'd "end up playing the game rather than doing real work."

The buzz developing around *Lotus Challenge* is due in part to Lotus actively playing a large part in the game's development. They quite rightly point out that this is the first time a car manufacturer has had so much involvement in the development of an interactive product. Clive Chapman, grandson of Lotus founder Colin Chapman, has even made an impromptu visit to the company asking to play the demo. Here was a man that shouldn't genetically be able to use a joypad but he took to it like a pro, driving the cars effortlessly. Chapman was either a secret games player at heart or the Virgin/Lotus/Kuju collaboration was proving a success.

Lotus Challenge is released during early summertime and is looking like a serious contender for a high chart position. Expect more on this tire-shredding PlayStation 2 driving simulation next issue. □ BL

PS2 CHARTS
The movers and shakers in the UK PlayStation 2 Top 10.

#4: TIMESPLITTERS
It's finally starting to slide down the charts but first-person shooter *TimeSplitters* deserves to blast straight back into the top three. Faster and more playable than *Unreal Tournament*, it's also the PlayStation 2's best multiplayer game yet, bar-none.

	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER
1.	SSX	EA Sports (Canada)	EA Sports Big
2.	TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT	Namco	SCEE
3.	FIFA 2001	EA Sports	EA Sports
4.	TIMESPLITTERS	Free Radical Design	Eidos
5.	RIDGE RACER V	Namco	SCEE
6.	DEAD OR ALIVE 2	Tecmo	SCEE
7.	SILENT SCOPE	KCE Studios	Konami
8.	SMUGGLER'S RUN	Angel Studios	Rockstar
9.	ISS	KCEO	Konami
10.	X-SQUAD	EA/Square	EA

*Charts © ELSPA/Compiled By Chart-Track (w/e 13/01/01)

#1: SSX
Maybe the freezing weather sweeping the country has caused a recent flurry of people to seek out this top title, because *SSX* has retained its rightful place at number one. A blistering combination of arcade gameplay and death-defying courses justifies its premier position.

#9: ISS
Konami's *ISS* climbs into the Premier League of PS2 games. Still superior to the unit-shifting *FIFA 2001*, it should be sought after by true footie fans. However those in-the-know will be waiting for the far-superior KCET version to finally make it to PS2.

FACT BELCH
WE set the questions. YOU give the answers.

QUESTION: **We asked 25 gamers, "What is the first DVD movie you'll play on your PS2?"**

A Sixth Sense
B Fight Club
C Gladiator
D The Mummy
E Enter The Dragon
F Blade
G The Matrix
H The Exorcist
I Toy Story
J MI-2
K ST: First Contact
L A Perfect Storm

A B C D E F G H I J K L

QUESTION: **We asked the same people, "What is your favourite pie?"**

A Fisherman's
B Pecan Pie
C Steak
D Beef and Onion
E Apple
F Cherry
G Chicken
H Mince
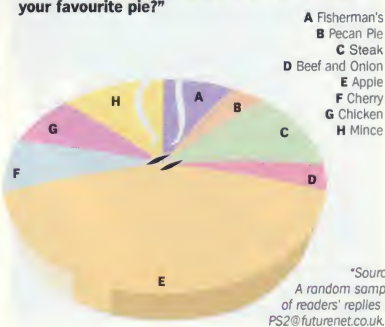
*Source: A random sample of readers' replies to PS2@futurenet.co.uk. It could be you!

Starting quietly with *Unreal*, Infogrames games will soon be flooding into the shops.

FRENCH FANCIES
Infogrames announces an impressive PS2 line-up.

AFTER A FAIRLY UNASSUMING start with regards to PlayStation 2 games, Europe's largest games publisher, Infogrames has suddenly bounced into life with a goody-bag of forthcoming PS2 releases. And it is anticipated that all forthcoming titles will be received with the same fervour as it's debut PS2 title *Unreal Tournament*.

The majority of titles set for release remain shrouded in secrecy with Infogrames remaining tight-lipped. Those we can mention, though, include the much anticipated and already announced *Stuntman* (Reflections' spin-off from the successful *Driver* series), *UEFA Challenge* (see Gallery, page 53) and a new *Le Mans 24hrs* title, developed by Melbourne House. The animated version of comic book legend *Superman* and a port of the extremely playable Dreamcast racing game *Wacky Racers* are also coming to PS2.

On the driving front, the long running *Test Drive* series is set to make a return with *Test Drive Off Road Wide Open* and *Test Drive 2001*. A slew of other driving games are planned. Details remain sketchy but titles include *Riders*, *Moto Mayhem* and *Supercross*. Finally, a PS2 skateboard title called *Splashdown* has been mooted along with a tennis game and a licence of *La Femme Nikita*, the action TV show.

OPS2 is sworn to secrecy about the remainder of Infogrames' other PS2 ventures, but it would be a foolish move if the French-owned publisher didn't release sequels to such successful (and expensive) PSone franchises as *Mission: Impossible*, *Alone In the Dark*, *V-Rally*, *Men In Black* and *Hogs Of War*. The forthcoming games are guaranteed to get Dual Shock 2s rumbling with anticipation.

Wacky Racers and the **Test Drive** series – just a few of the brands getting a next gen upgrade for PS2.

*Further news updates are available from: www.uk.infogrames.com

Red Faction is teeming with violent Ultor security determined to bury your character, Parker.

Friend or foe? Players have to discover who to trust and who to kill.
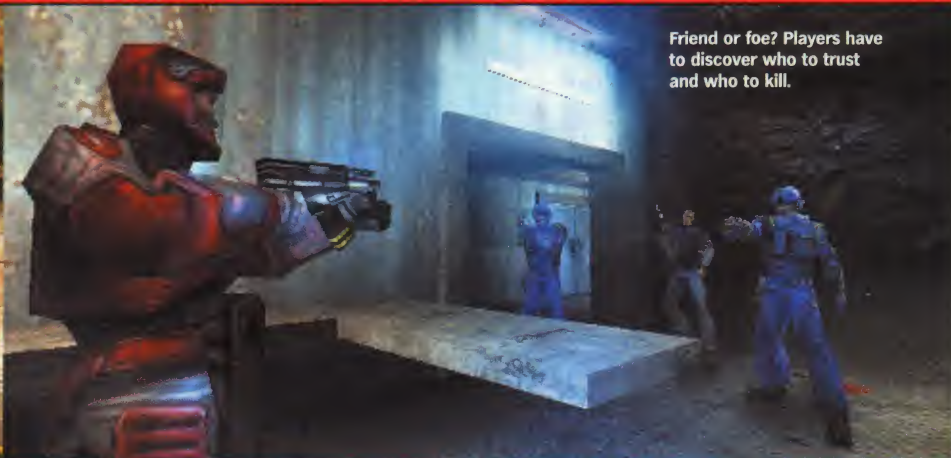
MISSION TO MARS

Destroy the environment in the explosive *Red Faction*.

OPS2 FIRST MENTIONED THQ's Mars-based first-person shooter *Red Faction* back in issue #01, giving a glowing report of the game's advanced physics that allow large chunks of the game's scenery to be blown into smithereens. Now, five months on the exciting sci-fi blaster is nearing completion and developer Volition has managed to pack in even more features to ensure it will be one very unique and immersing PlayStation 2 title.

Red Faction focuses on the experiences of a miner called Parker, who leaves Earth to work for the Ultor Corporation after being lured by a sensational advertising campaign that heralds the Martian settlements as a veritable Utopia. However, as in most cases, the advertising is a lie and the mines are in fact a living hell – rampant with disease, dreadful working conditions and guards that violently suppress any uprisings or strikes. By

//It's the details in *Red Faction* that set it apart from other games in the genre//

chance, Parker triggers a full-scale uprising by killing a guard. It is now your task, as Parker to find allies, destroy the Ultor oppressors and get back to Earth.

After finally getting our hands on this new build, *OPS2* couldn't wait to test out the weapons available – and truly there are some hefty pieces of war machinery in there. Loading up with a massive shoulder-mounted rocket launcher, you can send a hefty projectile into the distance and watch as it hits something solid, showering the area with powdered rock and shards of metal. Once the smoke clears, a large piece of wall is clearly missing and any unfortunate guards in the vicinity have been reduced to their component parts.

It's the details in *Red Faction* that set it apart from other games in the same genre. For example when you fire off a machine gun round in an area filled with water, the shell cases fall out from the weapon causing minute splashes and ripples to spread out from the point of impact. Another jaw-dropping moment came when an assault rifle was fired at the roof causing debris to fall down on a group of Ultor guards, while the

feeling of firing multiple rockets at a wall until an impromptu tunnel is formed (complete with tiny pools of water that have collected in the dank environment) was liberating.

Volition looks to be creating something special, with smoothly animated characters, an involving labyrinthine plot, 14 chunky weapons and eight interactive vehicles that players can jump in and control including an armoured personnel carrier, a piece of drilling equipment (think *Total Recall*) and a fabulous mini-sub that allows 360 degrees of motion for full-on underwater torpedo battles.

Valve's *Half-Life* broke the mould by being a first-person shooter that created a completely believable and utterly terrifying world, populated by angry and intelligent enemies that planned their attacks. *Red Faction* has all that, but combined with the ability to destroy the physical space around you, delivering a sense of freedom that hasn't been seen before in a first-person shooter. With a two-player option planned, plus the possibility of expansion discs being released in the future to extend the story line, *Red Faction* should bring the house down when it hits the shelves in May. ☐ **JS**

FUN WITH PHYSICS
It's not just the weapons that will inflict injury – the scenery can too.

Red Faction delivers whole new ways to dispose of bothersome enemies. Now instead of just shooting people, you can fire above them to crush their delicate torsos with huge falling rock debris. Or maybe fire a missile at a guard standing near a window to cut them into kebab strips with sharp shards of glass. Featured here is a poor soul who happens to be standing near a concrete structure transporting molten metal. A quick blast from a Rail Gun and... barbecued guard.

CONTROL FREAK

SCEE's 'augmented reality' demos point to a new future for PS2.

AT SCEE'S CENTRAL offices in SoHo, *OPS2* was recently presented with a series of technical demos from SCE(UK)'s Research and Development Team. Presented by SCEE's development guru Phil Harrison, the demos are not traditional games but instead show how, with the inclusion of a low-cost USB camera and the right software, PlayStation 2 can do a whole lot more than drive a car around a race track.

First up was the 'Dungeon' demo premiered at last year's ECTS (see Spy, issue #01). As the demonstrator waved a toy lightsaber and a Nerf club as props, the USB camera tracked and converted these movements into an on-screen medieval mace and torch. Similarly, the ECTS 'Flying' demo had our demonstrator flapping his arms as wings and soaring through the skies.

New to *OPS2* though was a technical demo that placed a group of spiders 'onto' the TV version of our demonstrator's body, the USB camera again registering his movements as he 'wiped' the insects away. An even more impressive take on this technology was the 'Butterfly' demo. A cloud of butterflies filled the screen, flying around randomly. Holding up a red ball sent the butterflies into spasms of excitement while a blue ball had them running for their lives. One butterfly however loved this blue ball and, as our screenshots show, as the it was moved towards the camera, the size and definition of the butterfly increased. A further version of this technology was the 'Wizard' demo, where a witch flew around the screen. She would 'sit' on the blue ball, singing and dancing to amuse herself, but just couldn't take her eyes off the red ball – her head swivelling to follow its movements.

"The demos were developed in-house, led by a very capable engineer in my old US R&D team called Dr Richard Marks," reveals Harrison. "His work has pioneered the combination of a low-cost USB camera with high-performance software to analyse the video stream and perform complex image and shape recognition algorithms. Internally we refer to it as 'augmented reality', but we'll let the marketing people have a think on that one before we use it in connection with a product!"

Despite Harrison's comments that the ultimate application of this technology is way beyond traditional games, the implications are huge for the way games are interfaced with and played. The use of a lightsaber in the 'Dungeon' game points to an obvious future where *Star Wars* games translate your lightsaber slashes directly on-screen.

"There are a lot of game ideas that would be amazing fun with this technology and open up a new experience for the player – particularly when we add realistic computer graphic elements seamlessly into the video stream," confirms Harrison.

This last comment points to a future where a USB camera could track a player's full body movements, with an avatar of the gamer appearing on-screen and moving in tandem with their actual physical movements. The implications for everything from Bemani games to beat-'em-ups are massive and shows just what SCE mean when they say their PlayStation 2 is more than just a simple videogame console. ☐ MG

//The implications of this technology are huge for the way games are played//

The ability of the PS2 to recognise movement means this kind of effect could be commonplace.

(Top) Our witchy friend admires the red ball. (Middle) The mace and torch that could be a lightsaber. (Bottom) Those beautiful butterflies.

Move the ball and the witch stays with you.

The track and car design seems to have been heavily influenced by a certain Mr Verne...

WACKY RACERS

Twisted future-retro racing in *Crazy Car Championship*.

IF YOU STEP into the cockpit of a future racing game these days, you'll almost inevitably be confronted by cold, neon-lit worlds filled with the latest in sleek and speedy *WipEout*-style ships. That is, unless you give the latest PS2 racer *Crazy Car Championship* a spin.

Developed by Synaptic Soup, a company comprised of ex-Bullfrog and *Evolva* coders, the game is a wondrous mix of Victorian technology and Jules Verne-inspired fantasy creating a highly original and visually stunning title. "It's the perfect answer for gamers looking for the ultimate in escapist racing fun," says Vince Farquharson, Development Director of Synaptic Soup. "Why race around cities that you've probably been to, in cars you see every day, when you can race in a fantastical world, in a machine born of your own imagination and compete in a tournament where the only rule you need to adhere to is to have fun?"

Art Director Karl Wickens has the job of making the imaginative and ambitious concepts of *Crazy Car Championship* a reality and was keen to avoid just reproducing the future 'look' of other upcoming PS2 racers. "One of the main aims was to give the aesthetics a warm friendly appeal, more in the vein of fantasy than sci-fi," he says.

Crazy Car Championship gives gamers a choice of nine original characters racing across 12 tracks from three very different floating islands: Steam, Atomic and Space. Each vehicle is completely customisable, allowing players to 'invent' their own race machine.

"You can choose to fit steam age wheels driven by big pistons, an atomic age engine covered in chrome and fins, and space age bodywork," enthuses the game's Technical Director Rik Heywood. "All the components you can buy in the game affect the performance of the car, but they also change the look significantly as well." Synaptic Soup also promises that 18 unusual weapons will litter the tracks, such as a lethal Gravity Gun, a metal-bonding Super Magnetism power-up and several variants on the homing missile.

Multiplayer options are currently being planned that will include split-screen competitions and – cue the sound of much trumpet fanfare – online gaming. "We plan to allow up to four players to race on the same machine," says Heywood. "There will also be online multiplayer games, so you can still race your friends while getting the whole screen to yourself." Although Synaptic Soup's first title is still in early development (release sometime in 2002) and currently without a publisher, from the look of these beautiful screenshots, *Crazy Car Championship* is a game that could've persuaded HG Wells to trade in his time machine for a PlayStation 2. ☐ JS

For more info check out: www.synapticsoup.com

Now when was the last time *GT3* offered you the chance to drive a steam powered car?

coin-op

With **Guy Woodward**, Editor of coin-op bible *AB Europe*.

.05 MORTAL KOMBAT (1992)
The savage ferocity of the action in Midway's original *Mortal Kombat* drew a cult following to the franchise, and three further versions were released. Midway promises that *MK5*, due for release mid-year, will be the best version yet of the violent beat-'em-up. Its initial release inspired the film of the same name, starring Christopher Lambert. And what higher praise could you wish for?

PARLOUR GAMES
The frantic Far Eastern gambling obsession of pachinko heads to the UK.

THE JAPANESE LOVE NOVELTY GAMES, and have seemingly always done so. Witness the omnipresence of the simple, mechanical pachinko games. They all derive from one single, basic formula: players buy a number of balls at a cost of ¥4 (2p) each, drop them into a rotating drum, where they are fired around a playfield via a pinball-type mechanism. Despite the simple nature of the game, pachinko remains enduringly popular among both young and professional males, with an astonishing three and a half million units located across Japan.

This hugely popular game is now heading towards our shores. The BS Group have plans are in place to open the first pachinko parlour in London later this year. Not only will players be able to experience this addictive delight, but they will be able to soak up true Nipponese atmosphere with Japanese decor and food. The parlours will also include 'pachisuro' machines – a similar concept to pachinko but players must time the stopping of a spinning reel to win prizes.

Anticipating a relaxation of UK gaming rules over what the difference between an arcade and a casino is, BS hopes to build parlours holding up to 300 pachinko machines as well as arcade games. Only in Japan? Not for long... □ **GW**

Will the pachinko craze catch on in the UK? Um...

Keep garlic and crucifixes to hand – you'll need them.

BITE ME
Namco sharpens *Vampire Nights* for arcade release.

According to faint murmurings emanating from Japan, Namco is heralding its *Vampire Nights* as the finest shoot-'em-up it has ever produced, with initial tests surpassing even the previously peerless light gun classic *Time Crisis 2*.

So what stunning techniques does the game employ to deserve such lofty lauding? An automatically reloadable and recoiled weapon action? Laser gadgetry to detect players' movements? Er, no, actually. It's just an orthodox shoot-'em-up with a ghoulish feel. It is, however, housed on Namco's System

246 hardware, a coin-op derivative of the PlayStation 2 platform, thus lending a certain nightmarish realism to the variety of evil foe which players must battle past to rescue the alluring damsel in distress (enough to persuade even the most cynical of players to keep ploughing coins in to the machine until the final scene). Not only do players have to fire lead into the exposed skulls of the undead, but they must also show a great deal of cunning to avoid a variety of fiendish traps and missiles. A PS2 release for *Vampire Nights* would surely be welcome...
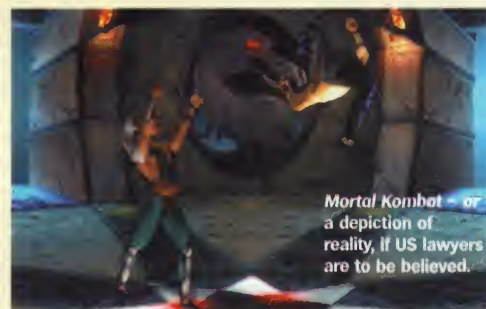
Mortal Kombat – or a depiction of reality, if US lawyers are to be believed.

MORTAL WOUNDS
Videogame company accused of inciting violence.

Midway is currently being blamed for the USA's fondness of teen street violence. A Connecticut woman has sued over the death of her 13-year-old son, claiming he was stabbed because he and his friend were still feeling the effects of, and acting out, scenes from Midway's bloodthirsty beat-'em-up *Mortal Kombat*.

The lawsuit claims Midway designed the game to convince players, "...that what they observed was only a game and no-one would be harmed if viewers replayed the violent acts they observed.." But would any judge in his right mind advocate that a 13-year-old could seriously believe that, by pressing a button, he could resuscitate his fatally stabbed buddy? Only in America.

ILLUSTRATION: WILL BARRAS

It could be you... Games failing to hit their original release date is a perennial pain.

SLIDE AWAY

OPS2 holds the videogames industry to account on its most annoying trait – slippage.

IT'S HAPPENED TO *Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec*, it's happened to *Final Fantasy X* and it'll happen to countless other games in the future – the promised release date 'slips'. It means magazines are wrong, gamers are disappointed, and worse of all, we have to wait for our lovely new PS2 games.

Mark Moorer, a disheartened gamer from Ipswich, wrote to *OPS2* in frustration, "it really pisses me off. It's a promise broken as far as i'm concerned. Why do they bother giving a release date in the first place?" Jay Balogun, Manager of a London-based, specialist videogame shop Direct Intel Ltd is often similarly frustrated, "it creates problems with having to source and update such games slippage, especially with pre-orders and release schedules. Sometimes you're not aware until the last minute or even days afterwards."

Wanting to get to the bottom of this perennial problem, *OPS2* asked the people who make the games why release dates often appear to be in the lap of the gods. Leslie Benzies, Development Manager for DMA (currently working on *Grand Theft Auto 3*) believes part of the problem is the next generation technology itself.

"Due to the complexity of games it's very difficult to keep track of progress. Problems are not noticed until very late in the development cycle by which time it is usually too late, leading to slippage or, in some cases, poor quality games," he explains.

This view was supported by Jon Rissik, UK Marketing Manager for Electronic Arts who added that, "We are as frustrated by slippage as the consumer – particularly if the game in question is very strong. But we will not release anything until we are completely satisfied that the consumer will not experience problems after purchase."

Harvey Elliott, Acclaim's UK Studio Manager also recognised that gamers enjoy but, sometimes, suffer from the experience of 'on-the-edge' technology. "There is no benefit to us in announcing a date we don't believe can be hit. If the title is slow through Quality Assurance or has errors or bugs towards the end that are

hard to fix then we have very little cushion between completion and release dates and that time can quickly erode." So what can be done to stop slippage happening in the future?

Martyn Brown, Team 17's Development Director suggests, "There has to be a more concerted effort from developers and publishers to work closer together and understand the problems each face. Until this happens we will continue to have missed dates and misinformation, mostly fuelled by a hugely expectant public, who clamour for titles as soon as they're announced."

Hopefully the situation of big-name titles being pushed further and further back in the release schedules will gradually ease as the PlayStation 2 bandwagon gathers momentum. Until then, it looks like gamers should continue to take newly announced games release dates with a rather generous pinch of salt. As ever, we'll keep you posted... ☐ **PR**

//**"We are as frustrated by slippage as the consumer – particularly if it's a strong title." Jon Rissik of Electronic Arts**//

DESERT STORM

Dangerous driving in *Paris-Dakar Rally*.

The Paris-Dakar Rally is unique in that there are no restrictions on the vehicles that can race.

ACCLAIM'S EXCITING NEW racer is based on the 6,500 mile race through some of the world's most inhospitable and dangerous locations. Spread over 12 stages *Paris-Dakar Rally* takes players through Parisian suburbs, dense jungle, scorching desert sand dunes and dusty tracks to in West Africa.

Developer Broadsword Interactive is planning to fully utilise the PS2's advanced graphics to reproduce various environmental hazards such as bad weather, wild animals and the accurate

physics of the 24 race vehicles. "We're offering gamers the chance to race a variety of vehicles – cars, buggies, bikes and quads – across diverse North African terrain," said *PDR* Producer Roger Carpenter. "To finish, you'll need to master driving in all conditions, protecting your crew and vehicle."

Windscreens can shatter, tyres burst and doors fall off, creating a the gruelling conditions that the 350 drivers have to endure in real life. *Paris-Dakar Rally* is set for release in June. □ JS

Drivers also face a battle against harsh environments.
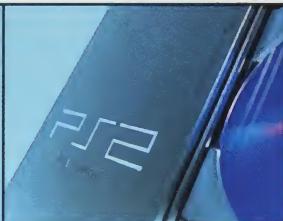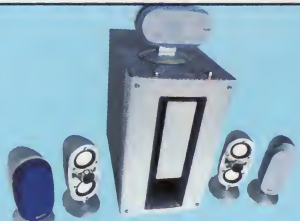
It was tough we know, but we weren't just going to give away these great prizes. You had to work for them...

TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT – THE ULTIMATE QUIZ: THE ANSWERS

At last you can stop wracking those brains trying to find out which character is also known as Battling Dragon, or who Bryan Fury was named after.
Here are those long awaited answers and a list of the lucky winners whose resourcefulness in finding answers can only be commended.

EASY (NO BELT)

1. **Q** Who organised the first 'King of the Iron Fist Tournament'?
   A Heihachi Mishima

2. **Q** Who organised the second tournament?
   A Kazuya Mishima

3. **Q** Who taught Jin to fight?
   A Heihachi Mishima

4. **Q** What is Jin's preferred fighting style?
   A Karate

5. **Q** Why is Ling Xiaoyu competing in the tournament?
   A To get money to build a theme park

6. **Q** How old is Ling Xiaoyu?
   A 16

7. **Q** What colour are Ling's eyes?
   A Brown

8. **Q** In which of the *Tekken* series does the fighter Unknown appear?
   A *Tekken Tag Tournament*

9. **Q** Who is Jin's mother?
   A Jun Kazama

10. **Q** What is Jin's country of origin?
    A Japan

NOT SO EASY (WHITE BELT)

11. **Q** What is the name of the *Tekken Tag Tournament* sub-game?
    A *Tekken Bowl*

12. **Q** In the playground which *Tekken* character can be seen wandering in the background?
    A Panda

13. **Q** When Eddy is dressed in his yellow and green costume, what colour is the hairband keeping his hair up?
    A Purple/pink

14. **Q** How many studs are there on Jin's gloves?
    A 10 on each

15. **Q** What character has a scar over their left eye?
    A Bryan Fury

16. **Q** Name two *Tekken Tag Tournament* fighters who wear glasses or goggles?
    A P-Jack, Tiger or Hwoarang

17. **Q** Who has the word 'Falsca' written on their costume?
    A Eddy Gordo

18. **Q** Who is the self-appointed leader of the Manji Party?
    A Yoshimitsu

19. **Q** What is King's occupation?
    A He runs an orphanage

20. **Q** Besides a Panda, what other bear can you play Kuma as?
    A Polar/Grizzly Bear

TRICKY (BLUE BELT)

21. **Q** Who's fighting style has a strong connection to breakdancing?
    A Eddy Gordo

22. **Q** And why?
    A Breakdancing has its origins in the Brazilian Martial art capoeira

23. **Q** What is Gon?
    A The anime dinosaur from *Tekken 3*

24. **Q** Which character is an archaeologist?
    A Julia Chang

25. **Q** How is Lee Chao-Lin related to Jin?
    A He's his adoptive uncle

26. **Q** Who is Ling's best tag partner?
    A Panda/Kuma

27. **Q** How did Heihachi first try to dispose of his son's body?
    A By throwing him off a cliff/into a deep trench

28. **Q** Which character spent time in jail for a crime they didn't commit?
    A Eddy Gordo

29. **Q** With Nina's plum coloured outfit what does she wear on her right thigh?
    A A dagger/knife

30. **Q** What is the name of Forest's father?
    A Marshall Law

HARD (BROWN BELT)

31. **Q** Which character is the 'Battling Dragon'?
    A Lei Wulong

32. **Q** Who's name translates as 'Flowering Manhood'?
    A Hwoarang

33. **Q** How long were Anna and Nina frozen for?
    A 19 years

34. **Q** Who stowed away on Heihachi's yacht and defeated his men in order to prove themselves worthy enough to enter the tournament?
    A Ling Xiaoyu

35. **Q** Name three characters who have mimicry as a fighting style.
    A Mokujin, Tetsujin, Unknown, Angel or Devil

36. **Q** What substance did Dr Boskonovitch think would save his daughter?
    A Ogre's blood

37. **Q** What is special about Kazuya and the Devil's tag partnership?
    A Kazuya morphs into the Devil and visa versa.

38. **Q** What do Unknown and Jin have in common?
    A They both have the same tattoo

39. **Q** What is the exact name of Boskonovitch's cyronetic experiment that he performed on Nina and Anna?
    A Cold Sleep Number 2

40. **Q** What is the name of *Tekken Tag*'s principal character programmer?
    A Daizaburo Nakamura

VERY HARD (BLACK BELT)

41. **Q** What date was the first *Tekken* released in America?
    A 8 November 1995

42. **Q** What does Kunimitsu mean in English?
    A Warrior of the Country/Country Warrior

43. **Q** The word 'Zaibatsu' is often used when

referring to Heihachi's empire, what is a 'Zaibatsu'?
A A holding company – often family run. Established to boost the Japanese economy.

44. **Q** Who is *Tekken Tag Tournament*'s Project Director?
    A Mashiro Kimoto

45. **Q** What American cartoon family is namechecked on the Street Level?
    A The Jetsons

46. **Q** How many *Tekken* games are there in existence?
    A Five. *Tekken*'s 1,2,3, *Tag* and the Wonder Swan *Tekken Card Challenge*

47. **Q** How is Masashi Tanaka linked to the *Tekken* series?
    A He created the *Gon* comics

48. **Q** Bryan Fury was named after who?
    A Brian 'Fury' Schorr, the Localization Coordinator of *Tekken 3*

49. **Q** What company manufactured Namco's official *Tekken* model figure collection?
    A Epoch Co Ltd

50. **Q** The *Tekken* development team think Yoshinari Mizushima – the Art Director – looks like which character?
    A Ling Xiaoyu

THE WINNERS
All bow to the true Kings of The Iron Fist Tournament. As you can see it came down to the best tie-breakers for 1st and 3rd prizes.

1st Prize A Sony AIBO plus accessories and a copy of *TTT*
Jonathan Walker, Co Armagh (49/50)

2nd Prize Sony SA-VE705 Pascal Home Cinema Speaker system, a PS2, and copies of *TTT*, *Ridge Racer Type V* and *Fantavision*
Jon North, Essex (49/50)

3rd Prize A PS2, and copies of *TTT*, *Ridge Racer Type V* and *Fantavision*
Daniel Bridel, Kent (48/50)

4th Prize A Sony NW-MS7 Memory Stick Walkman, plus a copy of *TTT*
Kwok-Wai Fan, Belgium (48/50)

THE BEAUTIFUL

OPS2 continues the search for the ultimate in PlayStation 2 perfection. This month: The most fiendishly playable side-scrolling shooter in the history of the world ever.

1. The addictive, hair-biting difficulty of Williams' *Defender*, that swallows your 10p and three lives after approximately 13.7 seconds, resulting in tearful and embarrassing nagging of parents for more cash money.

2. A collection of the wonderfully weird hoi-inducing alien Bydo lifeforms from *R-Type*, complete with levels lovingly constructed with alien stomachs, colons, intestines plus various bits and bobs left over from Jordan's boob ops.

3. Retina-scorching explosions that combine the pixel-perfect neon beauty of *Defender*, *Robotron* and bits of *Fantavision*. Ooooh! Aaaaah! MY BEAUTIFUL EYES!

4. Add those glorious Eighties arcade sound effects that could've blasted straight out of the Radiophonic Workshop's demo library. Spoon in the laser shots from *Defender*, plus the cascading 'swooping' sound from *Galaxians* and the 'jump' sound for *Donkey Kong's* infamous platforming plumber. Ah, 'tis sexier than Barry White after a Viagra enema.

5. Ship power-ups from the old-skool side-scrolling *Gradius* series. The ingenious system employed in the games involved a third fire button for choosing which power-up you wanted to use from a meter at the bottom of the screen – the more crystals you collect, the better the weapon. Futuristic delights included force fields, spread bombs, pulse lasers, photon torpedoes and five levels of speed-up for pheramone-pumping action.

6. The fuel bar from the classic arcade game *Scramble*. Means that you have to keep blowing up fuel dumps to refill your craft or it'll fall to the Earth quicker than Richard Branson's beard.

7. The ability to import images of friends and foes and shove them onto enemy aliens, so you can indulge in shooting their face off – especially if they have the visage of, say, Jamie Oliver or that smug AOL woman.

8. The two-player co-operative feature from Konami's war-mongering shooter *Gryzor* that meant gamers could double their firepower with two characters on-screen at the same time. Cover me!

9. A further multiplayer option that allows players to battle each other – one as the ship, the other as the alien commander. This could bring in extra strategy elements to side-scrolling shooters, so gamers can construct fiendish attack waves and formations to flummox their friends.

10. Rather than constantly replay the traditional side-scrolling formula, include the Mutators from *Unreal Tournament*. These could include such treats as 'Bouncing Bombs', 'Triple Speed', 'High Gravity' or 'Boss First', where you start with the end-of-level boss and work backwards through the game.

11. Has an enormous number of different level scenarios, including outer space, Egyptian temples, underwater kingdoms, ice worlds and real-life cities such as London and New York. Also includes an easy-to-use level editor for creating your own mad designs, such as 'Revenge of the Seventies Comedian' where players are attacked mercilessly by a psychotic swarm of miniature robotic flies with the head of Arthur Mullard.

12. Superb in-game option that allows players to set the screen view to any angle instantly from straight old-skool 2D through the isometric 3D of *Zaxxon*, to the gorgeous vector 3D of the *Star Wars* and *Tempest* arcade blasters. Ah, the Force will be with this one – always…

SCREEN SETTING: 20 [12]

HIGH SCOR

039

LIVES

FUEL

GAME

: 175,450

10 MUTATORS:ON

725

7

3

9

FUEL

SPEEDUP | MISSILE | LASER | OPTION | ? | ! | !!!

ILLUSTRATION: ARTHUR MOUNT

PlayStation 2 RELEASE DATES

Game Name	Genre	Publisher
March 2001		
Army Men: Sarge's Heroes 2	Adventure	3DO
ESPN Hockey Night	Sports sim	Konami
ESPN NBA 2Night	Sports sim	Konami
Eternal Ring	RPG	Ubi Soft
Evergrace	RPG	Ubi Soft
Knockout Kings 2001	Boxing sim	EA
Heroes Of Might & Magic	Adventure	3DO
NBA Live 2001	Sports sim	EA
Oni	Adventure	Take 2
Red	Strategy	Konami
Robot Warlords	Strategy/Shoot-'em-up	Midas
Shadow Of Memories	Adventure	Konami
Summoner	RPG	THQ
Unreal Tournament	First-person shooter	Infogrames
Warriors Of Might & Magic	Adventure	3DO
WDL: Thunder Tanks	Shoot-'em-up	3DO
ZOE (Zone Of The Enders)	Shoot-'em-up	Konami
April 2001		
7 Blades	Adventure	Konami
Army Men: Air Attack 2	Adventure	3DO
Formula One 2001	Racing sim	SCEE
Jungle Book	Adventure	Ubi Soft
Kengo: Master Of Bushido	Adventure	Ubi Soft
Sky Odyssey	Arcade flight sim	SCEE
Star Wars: Starfighter	Shoot-'em-up	Activision
The Bouncer	RPG/Adventure	Square
WinBack	Adventure	Midas
Confirmed second quarter 2001		
Commandos 2	Strategy	Eidos
Extermination	Adventure	SCEE
Gauntlet: Dark Legacy	Adventure	Midway
Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec	Racing sim	SCEE
Lotus Challenge	Racing sim	Virgin
MDK2 Armageddon	Adventure	Interplay
MTV Music Generator 2001	Music creator	Codemasters
No One Lives Forever	First-person shooter	Fox
Paris Dakar Rally	Rally sim	Acclaim
Quake III Revolution	First-person shooter	EA
Red Faction	First-person shooter	THQ
Spy Hunter: The Return	Arcade racer	Midway
Star Wars: Super Bombad Racing	Arcade racer	Activision
Stunt GP	Arcade racer	Virgin
UEFA 2001	Football sim	Take 2
Unconfirmed third quarter 2001		
4x4 Evolution	Arcade racer	Take 2
Age of Empires II	RPG	Konami
Black & White	God sim	EA
CART Fury	Arcade racer	Midway
Dark Cloud	RPG	SCEE
Drop Ship	Adventure	SCEE
Ephemeral Fantasia	RPG	Konami
Evil Twin	Adventure	Ubi Soft
G-Surfers	Arcade racer	TBA
Half-Life	Action	Sierra
Herdy Gerdy	Platform	Eidos
Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver II	Adventure	Eidos
Onimusha: Warlords	Adventure	Capcom
Project Eden	Adventure	Eidos
Resident Evil Code: Veronica X	Adventure	Capcom
Silpheed	Action/Shoot-'em-up	Virgin
Soldier Of Fortune	First-person shooter	TBA
The World Is Not Enough	First-person shooter	EA
Titanium Angels	Shoot-'em-up	SCi
UEFA Challenge	Football sim	Infogrames
WingOver III	Flight sim	JVC
WipEout Fusion	Arcade racer	SCEE
Unconfirmed fourth quarter 2001		
Cool Boarders: Code Alien	Snowboard sim	TBC
Crash Bandicoot	Platformer	Konami
Devil May Cry	Adventure	Capcom
Duke Nukem	Adventure	Take 2
Final Fantasy X	RPG	Square
Gunslinger	Action	Activision
Hidden and Dangerous 2	Adventure	Take 2
Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons Of Liberty	Adventure	Konami
Silent Hill 2	Adventure	Konami
Spyro The Dragon 4	Platformer	Havas
Spider-Man	Adventure	Activision
Stuntman	Arcade racer	Infogrames
The Getaway	Arcade racer	SCEE
Tomb Raider: Next Gen	Adventure	Eidos
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	Skateboarding sim	Activision
WDL: War Jetz	Adventure	3DO

*Game release dates are correct at the time of going to press. All names and dates are subject to change.

MIXED PLEASURE

Architectural pioneer LOT/EK reveal its designer PS2 living space.

IF YOU'VE EVER dreamt of having your own room exclusively for gaming, you might consider this latest creation from New York's trendy architectural designer LOT/EK. The Mixer is a cosy space made from an actual industrial cement mixer, complete with a PlayStation 2, a dozen monitors, cable TV, surround sound, surveillance cameras and a comfortable interior with room for two people.

LOT/EK is comprised of Ada Tolla and Giuseppe Lignano, who after graduating in Italy ten years ago, moved to the Big Apple to develop their unique style of using recycled industrial objects as building materials. "We're bringing to the forefront of our live/work/play spaces new technologies that are generally hidden by embarrassment and fear," says Lignano. "The Mixer is a media-cocoon for the 21st Century in which all possible inputs of audio/video materials can be 'mixed' by the user at for their own pleasure – rather like a DJ does with music." When Sony releases its HDD/Broadband PS2

add-on this year, the duo insist that users will also be able to access the internet as well as play games and watch DVDs – all from inside the unusually-shaped chamber.

Previous projects by LOT/EK have included an apartment bedroom made from a converted oil tanker and office walls constructed from industrial metal sinks. Its latest architectural design is a leisure pavilion for students at the University of Washington in Seattle made from half the fuselage of a Boeing 747, which according to the pair will be "pretty spectacular." As for PS2, have the innovative architects played *Tekken Tag Tournament* to death yet? "Well, we haven't really tried," says Lignano. "Although we love watching our nephews play it." Right.

Any PS2 owners wanting the ultimate in gaming chic can purchase The Mixer directly from LOT/EK for a tidy $70,000 (£50,000). □ **JS**

More info at: www.lotekarchitecture.com

PHOTOGRAPHY: PAUL WARHOL

Why they decided to make gaming paradise exist in a cement mixer is beyond us.

5×5

Every issue, we put five questions to five industry professionals. This month: Are videogames art?

	Can videogames ever be considered an artform?	Will games graphics (say, *Metal Gear*) eventually be celebrated as much as, say, Warhol's *Campbell's Soup 1 (Tomato)*?	Do you feel there is a certain amount of art establishment snobbery towards videogames?	Should well-known games developers be revered as much as respected film directors?	Is there one videogame that you would consider 'a work of art'? If so, what and why?
Jez San CEO of Argonaut Games	Yes. Any form of expression, whether commercial or not, should be considered an artform. If games were just 'products', then our future might only be like that of shifting boxes. The videogames industry would like to be known more like the film and book industries, which are heavily commercial, but at the end of the day are recognised as an artform.	It's possible for a mainstream game to be remembered in that way. Maybe not *Metal Gear Solid*, but if you bring up *Pac-Man*, *Space Invaders* or *Donkey Kong* at any party, I'm sure more people will fondly remember it and get into heated discussion than they would do about Warhol's *Campbell's Soup*.	Any new commercialisation that mixes art and technology will be queried initially about whether it's art or commerce, or both. Witness the movie industry – it took a long time, and a *lot* of hard work (AMPAS with the Oscars, BAFTA and so on) before they were taken seriously as an art form.	There are few games that stand out as so good that their director/producers should be lauded as much as the major movie directors of our time. But also, remember that movies are made with actors, who are glamorous and behave like 'stars' whereas the creators of computer games aren't in any way glamorous and wouldn't look the part if they were to act like celebrities.	There are loads – too many to name. All the old classic home/arcade games like *Tetris*, *Mario*, *Zelda* and the super-old arcade games like *Defender*, *Robotron*, *Dig Dug*, *Pac Man*, *Tempest*. For me, it's anything I fondly remember – of course, with rose-tinted glasses because they all had their flaws. *Argonaut is currently working on several PS2 projects.*
Alex Hutchinson Freelance games writer from Down Under	The real question is whether games can be used to express complex ideas and emotions. There's no reason why not, although they often aren't. While many individual aspects of today's games could be called 'art', the whole usually couldn't. It's a question of marrying interactivity with the more traditional elements of good storytelling and effective presentation.	Almost. They're radically different forms. The overall package of *Metal Gear Solid* is what will stand up in the end. Graphics are only the skin of a good game. The impact of brilliant, revolutionary gameplay is what will eventually be compared to the impact of a new art movement like Warhol's art inspired.	There is always a lot of resistance to 'new' art. Half of it is ignorance and the other half is justified. Right now games are an adolescent form that really can't compete on an equal footing. Developers need to commit themselves to creating intelligent, emotionally mature software and players need to be open to the shift.	Absolutely, and within the industry (and among alert consumers) I think they already are. Creators like Shigeru Miyamoto, Yuji Naka and Peter Molyneux will eventually be seen as the fathers of a completely new art form. They may be working in a 'new' industry but great skill and creativity should always be respected.	Right now? Probably the *Zelda* games on the N64, *MGS* on the PSone and *Shenmue* on the Dreamcast. They all do a great job of putting gameplay first (which is what separates videogames from the traditional arts) while providing good stories and immersive experiences which shrink the distance between player and character. *Alex will write for food. Contact AlexH@Bigpond.com*
Matthew Brooks Programmer at Spiral House developers	Yes. Videogames are the result of artists, programmers, musicians and games designers engaging in a creative process. From my point of view, that's an artform. I think that the core of videogame art, something we could say is almost exclusively ours, is the art of creating interesting gameplay.	No. Warhol creates a new art movement and several works which are recognised all around the world. Kojima makes a fantastic videogame, but not one representing a new movement. Maybe if videogames reach a point where they have the same public profile as art, there's a chance of this kind of recognition happening – with the right sort of game.	Well, there may be from certain quarters, but there are artists out there now who have started working with multimedia, and moved on to develop interactive work which blurs the lines between traditional art and videogames. We may see the snobbery diminish, but there will always be people who think 'arse' rather than 'art'…	Awareness of big names like Miyamoto and Kojima is spreading from the world of the hardcore gamer to both the non-specialist press and the casual gamer. As the number of videogame players rises, the likelihood of major players becoming household names increases. In the future it's possible that the fame of some games developers could eclipse that of film directors.	*Super Mario 64*, because it started a new movement in videogames. Messing about outside the castle was almost too much fun for me, and that's before I started playing the game. It's simply a landmark title – it took everything that was great about platformers to the next level. It's since been the reference point for hundreds of games. *Spiral House is working on a new PS2 project*
Simon Byron Director at Bastion PR	I doubt it. Despite the good intentions of BAFTA or The Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences, there's very little real-world recognition. For something to be considered an artform, it needs to be accessed and judged by all – not just those with enough cash to be able to afford the latest console.	No – this industry is too obsessed with the latest technology for any single game to be revered in such a way. In a decade's time no-one in the real world will remember *Metal Gear Solid*.	I doubt the art establishment even knows what we get up to. They're too busy messing up their beds in their inside-out houses full of dissected cows to play their games consoles. If they do acknowledge us, it's in a hideous, patronising way.	Only in extremely rare cases – games, on the whole, are far too derivative to deserve such plaudits. It's only where an individual has complete influence over the style and content that they should be held in such high esteem. Hideo Kojima and Shigs Miyamoto are the only two names I'd say would be eligible.	The closest, I'd say, is *Final Fantasy VII*. It's truly beautiful, boasts some amazing technology and ranks as one of the most intense and emotional games I've played. That makes me sound like a girl – but it's true. When Aeris dies I very nearly cried. But – obviously – I didn't. *Simon is still waiting for a decent Batman film*
William Latham Creative Director at Computer Artworks	Computer games are just leaving the equivalent of the early days of cinema, to richer, immersive and more complex games experiences for wider consumer appeal. In the same way that cinema was the dominant art form of the 20th Century, computer games will be the dominant art form of the 21st Century.	I believe the appreciation of graphics from computer games will be more on a cult level in the same way that certain old films (for example *The Wicker Man*, *Witchfinder General*) have cult status and a following. In *The Thing* videogame we're really pushing the visual quality to its limits.	Yes, but the art establishment has always been backward. When artist Marcel Duchamp put a public urinal in a gallery in 1911, it caused an uproar. Now in 2001 most galleries exhibit similarly ordinary items, and sell them as art. I predict that in three year's time, computer games will be accepted as an artform, the same time The Rolling Stones are seen as classical music.	Yes, to a certain extent this is already happening. As team sizes grow the analogy between film making and computer games production becomes closer and closer.	None so far. But I really did like the visual look of *Sacrifice* (PC game by Shiny) – this got close. *Computer Artworks is currently working on PS2 game The Thing for Konami/Universal*

CARLING PlayStation®2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK UK TOUR

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"I will win that free subscription to *OPS2* – all before me shall fall!"

The state of those bollards after we'd left town cannot be verified as *OPS2* went to press...

"NO! It shall be I who wins the subscription to *OPS2*! Fear my mighty joypad!"

»GET ON THE BUS!

WAY BACK IN the mists of time, there was a bus. A bus unlike any other bus in that it was laden with freebies, plush cushions, snacks and most importantly, PlayStation consoles and demos of all the latest PSone games. This bus was the *Official UK PlayStation Magazine*'s tour bus and in the winter of 1998, it travelled Great Britain issuing goodies to all and sundry.

Two years later and, due to popular demand, it's back – this time, laden with shiny new PlayStation 2s and playable demos of all the best PS2 titles for 2001. The Carling *PlayStation 2 Official Magazine-UK* Tour will travel everywhere from Manchester to Cardiff, visiting universities around the land. This time out,

»You'll be supping the best lager while playing the best PS2 games and reading the best magazine...»

we've got together with the lovely bods at Carling to deliver not only the best games but also dish out a few free beers thirsty students. Given Carling has been the UK's number one lager for 30 years, you'll be supping the best brew while playing the best games (and reading – ahem – the best magazine). It's the chance of the term to hammer your mates at *Gran Turismo 3* and get a free booze while you're doing it!

The Carling *PlayStation 2 Official Magazine-UK* Tour will be at each university between 5pm and 10.30pm, with the exception of the Bristol date where things kick off at 10am (see opposite page). There'll be loads of freebies plus competitions to win everything from PlayStation 2s to a year's supply of Carling. Get there early to get in a spot of practise.

We'll bring you news of The Carling *PlayStation 2 Official Magazine-UK* Tour over the next few issues. Want to get your photo in the mag? Get on the bus! □ **MG**

Okay, we don't expect any real-life Konoko to perform this move... but she's gotta get close!

WORDS: SAM RICHARDS
PHOTOGRAPHY: MARC BURDEN

SEARCH FOR A STAR

A new console needs a new heroine, and for PS2, that role is fulfilled by the arse-kicking, pistol-swinging leading lady of Take 2's *Oni*. Lara is dead, long live Konoko? We'll see, but one thing's for sure – every new videogame heroine needs a real-life incarnation to make the fantasy that bit more real. *OPS2* and Take 2 are giving you, our lovely reader, the chance to decide which of the following four feisty femmes has the right credentials to slip into Konoko's armoured catsuit for real.

The chosen model will not just be a dumb mannequin; she'll be expected to assume the role of Konoko wholesale, walking the walk, talking the talk and convincing passers-by she could floor them with a flick of the wrist. So turn the page and study their CVs before using our form to vote for your favourite and a chance to win a PlayStation 2! Get voting now!

SOPHIE: High-kicking.

SALLYIA: Cross her palms.

GARZ: Walk this way?

ZOE: Salutes you, sir.

SOPHIE

Previous Experience: "I signed with Elite Premier models when I was 14. I've been in *Bliss*, *Sugar*, *J17*, all those teen mags, and I've been photographed outside the BBC building in a stretch limo pretending to be one of the Spice Girls for *Top Of The Pops Magazine*. I left the agency at 16 and since then I've done modelling for fun. It just happened that photos from a fetish wear shoot for a friend found their way into *Skin 2 Magazine*, and then into *Front*. I was featured in one of their girl supplements, before Jo Guest and before Kelly Brook!"

Qualifications: "I have to be honest, I've never done martial arts. I used to dance, but I've never felt like I want to attack someone!"

Videogame knowledge: "All my friends and family are passionate about videogames so they're around me all the time. I completed *Super Mario 64* when it came out. Currently I'm playing *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2*."

Why do you think you should be Konoko? "She's an extremely strong woman with a strong personality. Anyone can beef up their muscles and learn to kick people, but Konoko's got a brain as well. I think that's the dimension I would bring to her character."

Hobbies: "I'm studying History of Art at college. Art is my passion and I also paint."

ZOE

Previous experience: "I've modelled for Urban Stone, but I haven't done much else because I'm still at college. I'm on a Media Production degree course learning presenting and directing. I recently produced and narrated a documentary on the opening of a new local club, Area."

Qualifications: "I'm a karate black belt, but I've also done judo, boxing and yoga. I regularly enter national showcase karate competitions."

Games knowledge: "I don't have a PSone but I play a lot against my little nephew, fighting or James Bond games. I used to have a MegaDrive and I played *Sonic The Hedgehog* and *Mortal Kombat* all the time. I've seen most of the new PS2 stuff because I've got a friend who works in a game shop."

Why do you think you should be Konoko? "People always say I've got an attitude. Not in a bad way, but like I'm very determined. Obviously I do karate, and I've got a lot of confidence from being in front of a camera. Konoko seems like she's had to deal with a lot of stuff in her life, which makes her a strong character like me."

Hobbies: "Swimming, shopping, cinema, travelling and just socialising really! I went out to Tenerife for two months last summer and PR'ed for Lineker's Bar."

SALLYIA

Previous experience: "I was an underwater stunt double for Michelle Yeoh in *The World Is Not Enough*. I've also appeared in *The Fifth Element* and *Rogue Trader*. More recently I shot a trailer about global warming for the BBC in which a tank of water gradually filled up around my head. I've starred in pop videos for Happy Mondays, Peter Gabriel, Shea Seger and BBE. I was a Feng Shui expert on a Channel 5 ideal homes show. Oh, and I did a tour around the country singing Madonna songs alongside a Chinese Elvis."

Qualifications: "I practice Wing Chun because it's a non-aggressive martial art. Also, I can communicate on a different plane by calling on my long distance telepathy powers."

Games knowledge: "I was actually the voice of the announcer in *WipEout 3* and Chi-Ling in *In Cold Blood*. I also did some promotion for the Empire game *Sheep*. If I ever play games myself, I like the cute characters such as Mario."

Why do you think you should be Konoko?: "Like me, she has a very mysterious background. And I think my telepathy powers would be an advantage to her."

Hobbies: "Overtone chanting – I can split my voice into more than one note in order to connect with animals."

GARZ

Previous experience: "I've starred in *London's Burning*, *Risk*, a Levi's advert and a recent Toploader video. I've acted on stage all around the UK and in New York. My strangest role was in a Channel 4 short film called *Pantyhead* – about a girl, me, who works in a Chinese bakery. It's an abstract dance piece between her and a guy she sees on TV wearing white pants on his head. At the finale she squirts him with plum sauce. I'll admit, it was weird."

Qualifications: "I've done judo, gymnastics, yoga, kick-boxing, capoeira, rock-climbing, canoeing, potholing, bungie-jumping, er, jumping out of trees… Anything potentially life-threatening, I'll give it a go."

Games knowledge: "My brother is the kind of person who stays up until five in the morning playing with his mates. And he's just moved into my house. I can see how the obsession takes hold."

Why do you think you should be Konoko? "I already am her! It's not like a great transformation for me. I wear her sort of clothes, I have hair like her. When I read Konoko's biography, I already felt I knew her complete character."

Hobbies: "Cinema. I loved *Crouching Tiger*. When they fly over rooftops – I run like that in my dreams!"

ENTRY FORM

You've seen the girls, you've studied their CVs, you feel like Nigel off *Popstars*. So who most resembles the living embodiment of a cute-but-deadly anime heroine? Write and tell us which of the four models you think should be the real-life Konoko.
If your choice matches that of the majority, you stand a chance of winning a PlayStation 2 along with a copy of *Oni* and an *Oni* T-shirt. Explain your voting in less than 20 words and the writer of the most imaginative justification will net the booty.

Send your votes to: **Choose Your Konoko**, *Official PlayStation 2 Magazine*, **Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.** Or you can email them to us at **PS2@futurenet.co.uk** with the subject line labelled 'Choose Your Konoko'. Remember to include the reasons for your voting choice in less than 20 words.

NAME

ADDRESS

TEL

I THINK... [MODEL'S NAME]

...SHOULD BE THE REAL-LIFE KONOKO BECAUSE: [LESS THAN 20 WORDS]

Win a PS2 plus a copy of *Oni* and an exclusive *Oni* T-shirt.

G-SURFERS

WORDS: SAM RICHARDS

ON TOP OF THE WORLD

New Manchester developer Blade Interactive has done the unthinkable. It has mapped the entire surface of planet Earth into its frantically futuristic racer *G-Surfers*. *OPS2* heads north to look at the title Blade claim to be "the first true PS2 game"...

There will be at least 16 futuristic craft to choose from in the final game.

Terrains such as ice, water and sand all affect handling and tactics.
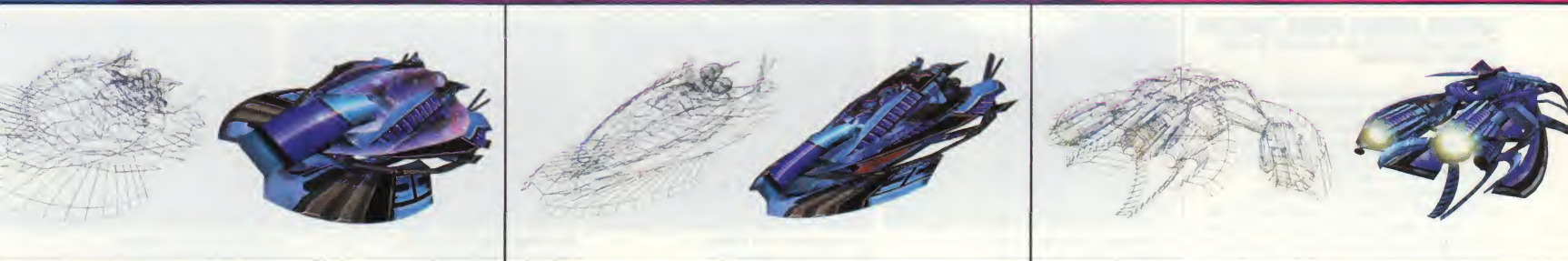
At first it sounded like outrageous hype. When game developers attempt to recreate real-world environments within their videogames, they usually get as far as a 3D model of the Statue Of Liberty before glossing over the rest. Upon hearing that every square kilometre of planet Earth had been captured and mapped for a brand-new speed-of-sound racing title in the *WipEout* mould, the first instinct was to scoff. But Blade Interactive isn't exaggerating. Let us explain.

Entering *G-Surfers*' Exploration mode, you can place a dot anywhere on the surface of the globe and your ship will be immediately transported to the location. Then, flying at 4000kph in any given direction, you will encounter topographical features exactly as they appear in real life. On this scale, only the more striking features of any landscape are noticeable, but there are mountains where there should be mountains, oceans where there should be oceans, deserts where there should be deserts. Mount Fuji, The Grand Canyon and the Amazon Delta are your new racing locations. Makes a bit of a change to Silverstone doesn't it?

Of course, the ability to race anywhere on planet Earth is astonishing, but it's a credit to *G-Surfers*' playability that the locations are only really incidental to the game. The surface of the globe has been mapped using the Manchester-based developer's 'infinity Engine'. This ingenious creation is ostensibly an experiment for future applications but it proved too successful to resist including here. The speed-of-sound racing thrills provided by G-

Surfers – coming on like a next-gen rewrite of Nintendo's classic *F-Zero* series – could have been set in any environment and still proved thrilling.

The game even boasts a second unique selling point, perhaps even more impressive than the mapping of the entire Earth's surface – you can build your own tracks *anywhere* you like. The player is basically given the same tools used to build all the existing 27 tracks, presented in a easy-to-use Edit mode. Within minutes you will be able to create the curving, looping, banking, undulating, forking route of your wildest imagination and be racing it against three other mates and an army of computer-controlled craft. *G-Surfers*' scope is not just global, it's potentially infinite.

STRANGE AMBITION

It may seem surprising for such an ambitious title to emerge from the development house whose only previous CV entry is *World Championship Snooker* for PSone (published by Codemasters it reached number two in the charts last summer). In fact, *G-Surfers* was the original impetus for this coterie of industry veterans to form their own company; *World Championship Snooker* was simply a shrewd move to capture an under-represented niche market and establish a reputation for Blade Interactive. A snooker sequel for PS2 is nearing completion but while suitably polished and impressive, it's *G-Surfers* that is going to turn heads.

Blade is keen to emphasise its commitment to PlayStation 2 from the beginning by creating a game worthy of a true next-generation console.   →
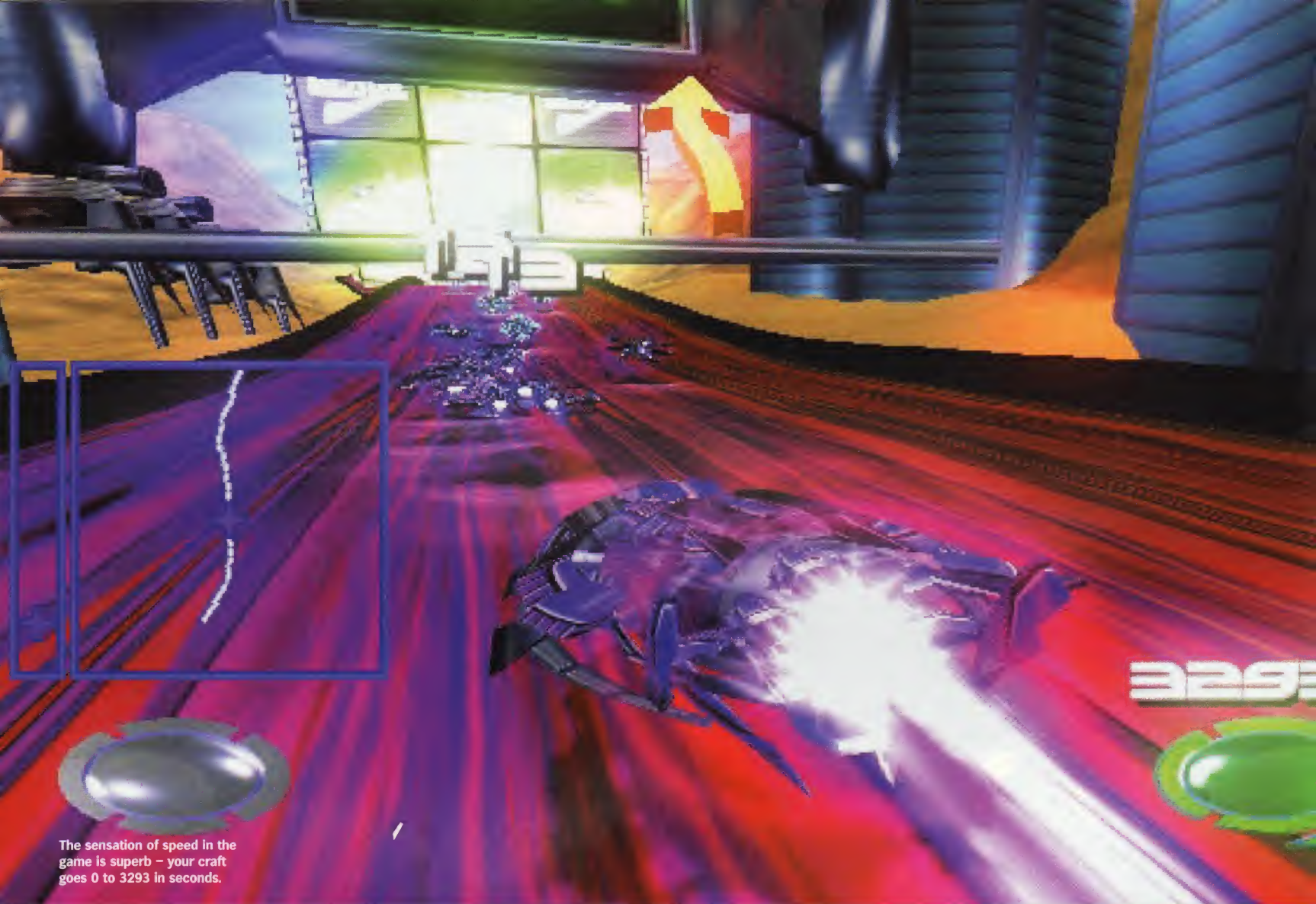
The sensation of speed in the
game is superb – your craft
goes 0 to 3293 in seconds.

LAYING DOWN SOME TRACKS
A step-by-step guide to *G-Surfers'* ground-breaking Track Editor

Previous games have provided track editors (notably *V-Rally 2* for PSone) but invariably these have transported you to a virtual wireframe world where the final outcome is a matter of trial and error. Thanks to Blade's Infinity Engine, you select your chosen environment first and start laying Tarmac without any need to exit to a wireframe model.

Tracks can be as long or short as you wish, even stretching across continents if you have the stamina to race for hours at a time. The moment you decide to build a finish line, you can race your creation with up to 15 computer-controlled opponents automatically following the course you've just built.

1. Traverse the world at your leisure, scouting for suitable land on which to construct a giant racetrack. Greenfield restrictions do not apply.
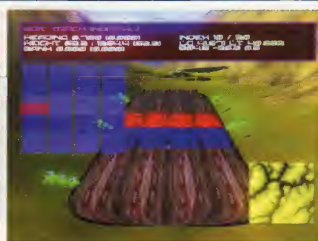
2. At the touch of a button, begin spewing Tarmac in a direction dictated by the left analogue stick.
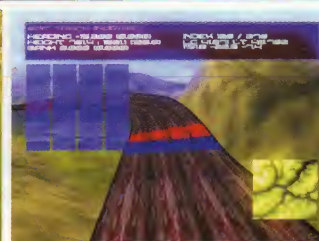
3. Change direction to form corners and hold down a second button to bank the track and thus soften tricky turns.
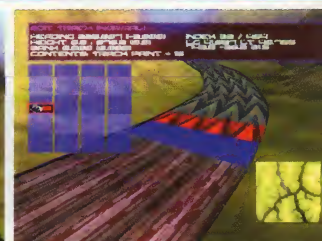
4. Choose from a range of gaudy hues and patterns to decorate various sections of track

The radar display alerts you
to the existence of short cuts
– vital on trickier tracks.

"I think a lot of developers have looked at PlayStation 2 in terms of a PSone update," says Managing Director Deborah Jones. "They've remade their PSone games and merely added a few bells and whistles. That's not how we see PlayStation 2 at all. We've lived, eaten, slept and breathed PS2 for the last two years. We view it as a revolutionary new format and we wanted to make a revolutionary new game for it."

Blade's confidence and ambition mirrors that of fellow Brit PS2 early-adopter Criterion Studios, as profiled last month in OPS2. "I'm actually sick to death of all the people in the industry who carp on about PlayStation 2's lack of performance and how the machine is too difficult to program for," Jones continues. "It's actually an amazing new system. It's given us so much to play with, we wanted to show our belief in PS2 by creating a game that simply couldn't have been made on any other games platform."

At heart, G-Surfers is a game of instant thrills. Much like the WipEout series, you select a futuristic racing craft that hovers just above the track. Although your vehicle will leap into the sky when presented with a jump, too much deviation from the given route will result in a spectacular crash. Avoiding such mishaps while travelling at face-contorting velocity is the key to success. Subtle cornering is not necessarily a feature. With 15 enemy craft to overtake before the finish line hurtles into view, it seems breakneck speed is the only option and finding short cuts for an even faster journey is paramount. Later courses are fiendish, with quicker alternate routes only accessed by amassing speed power-ups and making gigantic leaps of faith.

Progressing through the game's three championships (each consisting of nine multinational courses) will unlock various features to be used in the ingenious Track Editor. In G-Surfers, the tracks rather than the craft are the stars of the game. Nevertheless, by the time you've won gold on the final course, you'll be itching to take things to the next level. Conveniently by this point, you'll have everything you need to create your own tracks, which could conceivably far exceed the game's original selection in terms of difficulty and extravagance. In short, you set the limits. See 'Laying Down Some Tracks' for more Track Editor details.

IN A PERFECT WORLD

So back to the small feat of compressing the whole of planet Earth into one videogame. The buzz phrase used by Blade when talking about its Infinity engine is 'procedural generation'. It means that the landscape is actually being drawn as you travel across it, due to some hugely complex mathematical equations calculated beyond the horizon (no fog or pop-up here, friends).

If the graphics pertaining to the entire surface of the Earth were pre-drawn, the memory required to store such information would far exceed the memory capabilities of the PS2 – it would also make life hell for the poor sod who would have to colour in every mountain one-by-one. Instead of opting for this painstaking and essentially futile method, Blade inputted topography data for the Earth's surface – taken from US military data in the public domain – as a series of figures. Combined with the impressive variety of textures created, the Infinity Engine now draws accurate representations of the environment by itself, calculating even climate, vegetation and rock type in keeping with the location.

The game's research director Huw Lloyd, described by Jones as the "huge pulsating brain" behind G-Surfers, has even sculpted a curved surface for the planet despite the fact that the original information was gleaned from flat maps. Probably best that us lesser minds don't try to think about that too hard.

Due to these procedurally generated environments, G-Surfers is unlike every other racing game in that there are no 'backgrounds'. If you see a mountain in the distance you can fly there – or build a racetrack around it. Just imagine flying to Mount Everest and then turning it into a helterskelter. These environments make for fully convincing racing backdrops compared to the static surrounds of previous games.

"If you think of all the different locations to which you could possibly travel, there are actually 2.2 trillion polygons in G-Surfers which makes any other game that's ever been produced seem minuscule in comparison," Jones reiterates.

It was understandably impossible for the team to consider faithful facsimiles of the Earth's many settlements as well so instead they have cleverly evaded the issue. All major world cities and towns are featured, but in a generic form depending on their size. By setting the game in the future, Blade has negated the need to recreate contemporary building types; instead chrome skyscrapers prevail. A number of major world landmarks (the Eiffel Tower, the Houses Of Parliament) have been individually rendered and located accurately within their respective urban sprawls but you'd be hard pressed to identify Paris from London otherwise. Then again, who needs to race around Leicester Square when you can leap off the peak of Everest?

When creating your own tracks you can destroy, create and manoeuvre buildings at will. There is even an unlockable skyscraper model with holes in the centre for you to fly through. G-Surfers' real-time clock feature is best demonstrated while exploring a city. Artificially altering the time of day, you can watch the sun rise and set while lights gradually flick on all over the city as dusk falls.

THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH

Don't get the wrong idea, G-Surfers is a simple and exhilarating racing game first and foremost. It's just that a simple and exhilarating racing game wasn't enough for Blade. "We wanted to double and triple the depth provided by a game like Gran Turismo 3," says Jones. "You can build and edit and explore G-Surfers ad infinitum." Huw Lloyd chips in, "G-Surfers is not so much a game as a virtual world in which you can make your own game."

Blade only employs 20 staff and has produced G-Surfers in tandem with the World Championship Snooker games for PSone and PS2. For a game of such scale to emerge from such a small development team is phenomenal. Early signs suggest that Blade's aggressive ambition can be realised, the beneficiaries being every PlayStation 2 owner soon to be constructing their own perfect race track.

"I think G-Surfers can be the first true, from-the-ground-up PlayStation 2 title," Jones concludes. "If you look at SSX, the best PS2 game out there at the moment, it started life as a PSone game. G-Surfers was never anything other than a PlayStation 2 game. It has been designed to maximise the power of the new machine. Sure, Metal Gear Solid 2 will be fantastic. But we'll be there first." □

MD of Blade Interactive, Deborah Jones

// "I think that G-Surfers can be the first true, from-the-ground-up PlayStation 2 title" //
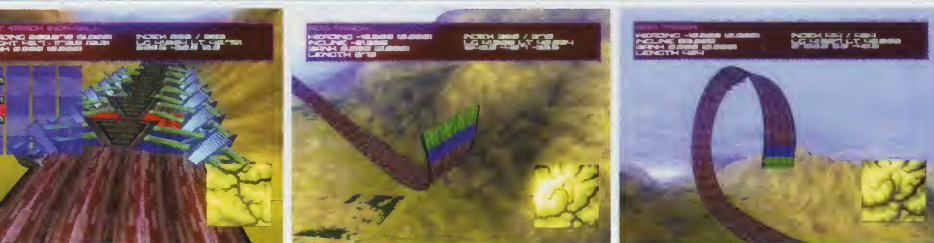
5. A number of objects including bridges and tunnels can be selected and attached to sections of track.

6. Curl the track upwards to form a jump. Then lay a section of 'invisible' track to provide the gaping nothingness below.

7. Alternatively, continue to curl the track around 360° and you've got yourself a death-defying loop.

from order and logic and enter a new place. It's not work. It's not home.

Here no maps have been drawn. No books have been written. Nothing is certain. Everything is possible.

WELCOME TO THE THIRD PLACE.

Crowds besiege the coin-ops at the ATEI show – but here games are free.

WORDS: SAM RICHARDS/PHOTOGRAPHY: KATHARINE LANE-SIMS

INSERT COIN TO CONTINUE

The batch of new coin-operated videogames displayed at the annual Amusement Trade Exhibition International show in Earl's Court were impressive, but their number decreases year on year. Are coin-op games still relevant to PS2 and the console game industry or is it Game Over for the arcades?

In Steven L Kent's venerable tome *The First Quarter: A 25-Year History Of Videogames*, he describes a time where coin-op videogame machines were ubiquitous. "In 1981 arcades were as common as convenience stores, and arcade games could be found just about anywhere." This caption appears beneath a photo of people playing coin-op videogames in what looks like a car showroom.

These days, the only coin-op game machines you see in pubs are *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire* or cheap, shoddy touch-screen quiz efforts. Chip shops haven't even bothered to upgrade the *Defender* clone they bought in 1983, while traditional seedy city centre arcades are now almost solely the preserve of the one-armed bandit.

The arcade videogame has been in decline for years. The main factor in its downfall has been the increasing power and capability of home consoles such as PlayStation 2. The whole point of piling coins into arcade cabinets is for a gaming experience unavailable at home. In terms of processing power, PlayStation 2's Emotion Engine is now equal to the chips in place in most arcade cabinets. In terms of what actually happens on the screen, arcade games are little or no better than the best PS2 games. A quid for a few minutes with *Tekken Tag Tournament* or £40 for infinite plays from the comfort of your sofa? Gamers have voted with their feet.

Videogame companies are acutely aware of the situation and have revised their coin-op development strategies accordingly. Over the last few years, typical arcade mainstay genres such as beat-'em-ups have gradually been put out to grass in retro heaven. Among the new arcade games on display at ATEI there were no beat-'em-ups and nothing resembling an adventure or platform game. Developers have resorted to constructing ever more extravagant cabinets where the players' physical interaction with the controller is becoming almost as important as the on-screen graphics. Giant luxury racing cabs as for Sega's *F355 Challenge*, lightguns, hammers, balls on chains, controllers shaped like musical instruments – these are now the features which distinguish arcade games from their console counterparts.

It's no coincidence that, as the focus of arcade games has changed, so have the locations in which you encounter them. Unless you live in the proximity of large game-centric arcades in the really major cities (such as the Trocadero and the Namco Centre in London) you'll probably have to visit to an out-of-town megaplex and mingle with screaming kids just to play the latest arcade games. After all, the new breed of arcade games with their simple rules and attractive physical control methods appeal to a family audience. Compare the queues of young girls waiting to play *Dancing Stage* to the haggard, chain-smoking figures loitering by the old *Street Fighter II* cabs, poised to administer a complex-combo thrashing to passing innocents.

A TIME OF CHANGE

Until recently, it was generally the case that games would debut in arcades before making a compromised appearance on consoles a year or so later. Now that the technology powering coin-op and home systems is comparable, the role of the arcades as a breeding ground for new game talent is diminishing. Sure, a handful of current PS2 games, notably *Silent Scope* and *Moto GP*, are arcade conversions. But plenty of releases that may have previously been thought to be arcade-style games – *SSX, Ready 2 Rumble: Round 2, Ridge Racer V* – have done just fine by heading directly to PS2 (in fact, *Ridge Racer V Arcade Battle* has just appeared in the arcades powered by Namco's PS2-based System 246 board but ironically it's not as good as the console version).

Konami and Sega have been competing to create the most ludicrous console versions of arcade controllers for their popular rhythm action games, but the expense of purchasing a PS2 dancemat or a set of maracas for Dreamcast has proved prohibitive. Ingenious as the Bemani home conversions are, it's difficult to imagine *Police 24/7* or *Air Trix* making the trip to PS2 with core gimmick intact. Arcade and console game development seems to be becoming increasingly diverse.

This split is perhaps exemplified by the attitude of the companies concerned. It appears that arcade and consumer divisions of the same companies rarely converse, particularly when it comes to marketing. You'd have thought that a publisher such as Konami would take every opportunity to capitalise on the interest generated by its killer PS2 products to publicise its arcade games and vice versa, but this never happens. While console divisions are active in promoting their wares either by courting magazines such as *OPS2* or advertising directly to the consumer, it's almost unheard of for arcade divisions to do the same.

You know roughly which PS2 are games are coming out when, but it's almost impossible to find advance information on a coin-op game until its sudden appearance in the arcades. This is a criminally missed opportunity. As aggressively-marketed PS2 games now define the videogaming scene, it appears that most involved in the arcade industry – particularly in the UK, ▣

> //The role of the arcades as a breeding ground for new game talent is diminishing//

COINING IT IN
The best new games on show at ATEI

ARCTIC THUNDER
(Midway)

The best get yet in the series that's given us *Hydro Thunder* and *Offroad Thunder*, this sled-based variation is the finest game on show at ATEI. Its speed is breathtaking and fiendish courses and a range of destructive power-ups combine to make *Arctic Thunder* a furious four-player racer. Play is enhanced by a cool vibrating cabinet which blows frosty air in your reddening face. Even better is the news that due to Midway's amalgamation of its arcade and console development teams, 90% of Midway's coin-op titles are now assured a PS2 release.
☐ Chances of a PS2 release: **Confirmed**

CONFIDENTIAL MISSION
(Sega Hitmaker)

An accomplished lightgun game which takes the immediacy of *Time Crisis* and combines it with the humour of *Silent Scope*. As one half of an *X-Files* inspired boy/girl detective team, you chase a Danny DeVito lookalike baddie around a museum crypt while sphinx-like statues spew rockets at your head. The range of weapons makes for innovative new twists on the typical lightgun pistol dynamic and skillshot interludes provide variety. It's a toss-up between this and *Vampire Night* for best new lightgun game on show.
☐ Chances of a PS2 release: **Low**

F355 CHALLENGE 2
(Sega AM2)

The sequel to the arcade's most meticulous (and most expensive) racer provides little that's new in terms in gameplay, but does offer a range of new tracks for everyone who's driven the originals to death. The luxury cab, featuring the triple monitor display, surround sound and performance printout was still on display. Simpler link-up cabs were also shown but only for two rather than four players.
☐ Chances of a PS2 release: **High**

CLUB KART
(Sega Wow)

This seemed to be the focal point of the Sega stand – for the suited execs at least – but it's difficult to see exactly why. It's a very polished, simple and enjoyable go-kart racer, instantly overshadowing all games of its genre with cute graphical touches such as your driver's back muscles tensing as you negotiate tight corners. However, *Club Kart* is hardly revolutionary. The addition of a data save feature, in the form of a postcard-shaped memory card, is an interesting move.
☐ Chances of a PS2 release: **Low**

Confidential Mission proved lightgun games are still in vogue.

→ which has no respected arcade game developers of its own – are content to fiddle while coin-op culture burns.

This laissez-faire attitude is compounded by a high level of dubious dealing. insiders wearily confirm that the UK coin-op industry is still held to ransom by cowboys and clueless suits way out of touch with contemporary tastes. As you can imagine, both these types are rather more motivated by buckets of shiny pound coins than they are by the latest gaming technology. if a one-armed bandit or a touch screen machine will generate cash faster than a videogame while taking up half the space, then the games are hastily shown the door. It's not all doom and gloom in the arcades. Although the floorspace at ATEI reserved for videogames is gradually eroded, there are still gems to be found.

SYSTEM 246 AND NAMCO

Namco remains a company that seems to prefer the traditional route of launching its new action titles in coin-op form before bringing them to the consoles. it's also the developer pioneering the System 246 arcade board whose hardware is based on the PS2's internal architecture. The link between the two systems has already been highlighted by *Ridge Racer V Arcade Battle*, though this game suffered from being the first effort on a new format.

Namco's new System 246 game, *Vampire Night*, looks to be a vast improvement. The latest title to reference Namco's lightgun heritage, a PS2 conversion is virtually assured, although we can expect *Crisis Zone*, *Ninja Assault* and, most likely, *Time Crisis II*, to get there first.

Perhaps even more exciting is the news that Namco have confirmed it is developing the sequel to what many regard as the greatest arcade beat-'em-up of all time *Soul Calibur*, on the System 246 board, making the oft-rumoured chance of a PS2 conversion almost a certainty.

"Namco is quite happy to put its software on all formats and systems." elaborates Namco Europe Technical Director Jonathan Lister. "it's had a relationship with Sony since the birth of the PlayStation and that relationship has continued into the era of System 246 and PS2."

Declining to comment on any fruits of this relationship beyond *Vampire Night*, Lister does admit this is not a generally prosperous time for the coin-op videogame industry in the UK.

"The size of the market has decreased but there is still a very strong demand for arcade games. We're now trying to find a compromise between the old joystick-and-button games which have been superseded by quality home titles and simulator machines that are expensive to manufacture. The right head-to-head driving game or the right two-player lightgun shooter in the right specialised cabinet – that's the kind of experience it's difficult to emulate at home." He's right of course, although the paucity of new or →

WILD RIDERS
(Sega Wow)

An amusing cartoon motorbike racer that carves its own graphical niche in the same way as *Jet Set Radio*, opting for a trashy, comic book style. Playing as one of two outlaw bikers – Wild Raven or Trish Moon – you must outrun the clutches of the ever-gaining police car behind you. The route is unorthodox guiding you through libraries, hotels and junk yards. The unique handlebar control system requires a tug to jump obstacles and a push to slide heroically underneath barriers. Potentially limited, but a whole lot of law-baiting fun while it lasts.
☐ Chances of a PS2 release: **Fair**

AIR TRIX
(Sega Hitmaker)

Another game to leave you physically panting after short plays, *Air Trix* is to skateboarding what *Alpine Racer* is to skiing and *Final Furlong* is to horse racing. Yes, you attempt to flip, ollie and grind an approximation of a real skateboard under your feet, although the good news is that you can't actually fall off and dislocate your arm. Coming across like *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* on happy pills, *Air Trix* is brilliant for two minutes, exhausting for four and life-sapping for five.
☐ Chances of a PS2 release: **Nonexistent**

NINJA ASSAULT
(Namco)

Essentially *Time Crisis* in the Sengoku era. The whole setting of the game is similar to Capcom's *Onimusha* in that katana-wielding warriors rub shoulders with supernatural mutant enemies who drop from the ceiling. Perhaps unfairly you are allowed a sturdy pistol with which to extinguish them, although the psychic blasts aimed at your person are more deadly than any grenade. Despite the interesting environments, *Ninja Assault* shows little evidence of genre evolution – there isn't even a duck pedal.
☐ Chances of a PS2 release: **Good**

MTV DRUMSCAPE
(Devecka)

The frauds! This isn't even a game at all, although there it sits, right in the middle of Namco's stand. Initial reconnaissance suggests a more complex take on Konami's *Drum Mania* but further investigation reveals no screen display to speak of, nor any high score to be gained. Instead, you are offered drum karaoke with a range of classic tracks available to be butchered by your ham-fisted slogging. Surely only an attraction for the most practised paradiddler.
☐ Chances of a PS2 release: **Nonexistent**

FAIRGROUND ATTRACTION

Are videogame coin-ops becoming more like seaside sideshows?

The floorspace occupied by videogame cabinets as ATEI is gradually colonised year on year by other coin-operated amusement machines. These include fruit machines, touchscreen cabinets offering trivia quizzes and low-quality retro games, and 'redemption machines' of the kind that con money from gullible kids with the lure of shabby soft toys. The type of machine taking its cue from fairground sideshows of old seems to be on the rise. These machines are also becoming more and more sophisticated, incorporating videoscreens and stealing ideas from the latest videogames.

Any self-respecting gamer would naturally scoff at the primitive nature of these machines which require you to do everything from wrestle with a buffalo's head to punching a picture of your mate's warped face to bashing a target with a hammer as hard as you can. Yet with the respected videogame companies striving to provide more approachable, physical interfaces to their games, the distinction between the two types of machines is beginning to blur, to the point where Konami's *Fighting Mania* could easily be classed in the fairground sideshow category.

Take a picture of your mate, then punch his face. Not a videogame, but not dissimilar to *Fighting Mania*.

A typical simulator – nice cabinet, shame about the game.
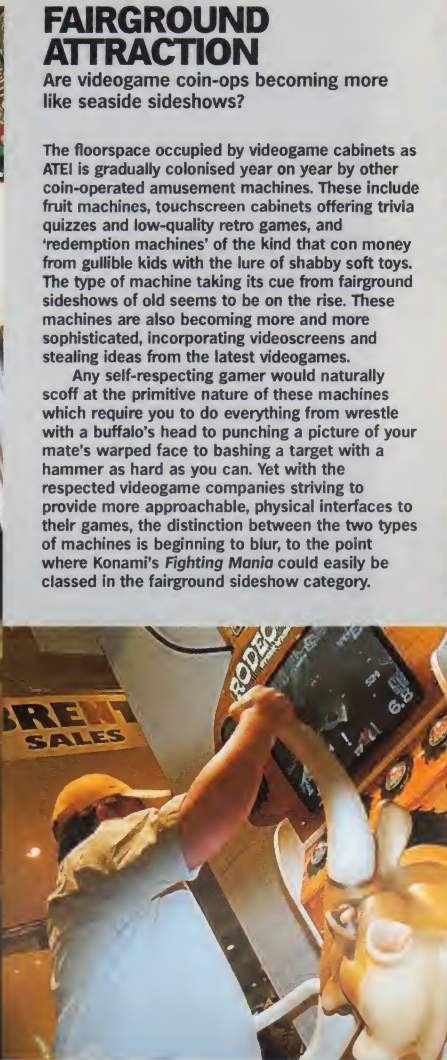
VAMPIRE NIGHT
(Namco)

Unlike *Ninja Assault*, this really will be the game that moves the lightgun genre forward. It's no giant leap, but at 70% complete, *Vampire Night* looks to display the kind of adept graphical touches that will fascinate arcade-goers. It even attempts to paste a story line to its rapid-fire antics, although you don't need to be told that a man with a hydra of eyeballs on stalks bursting from his skull should probably be peppered with lead immediately. Enemies are speedier and craftier than ever before, turning invisible and tunnelling underground to escape your attentions.
☐ Chances of a PS2 release: **High**
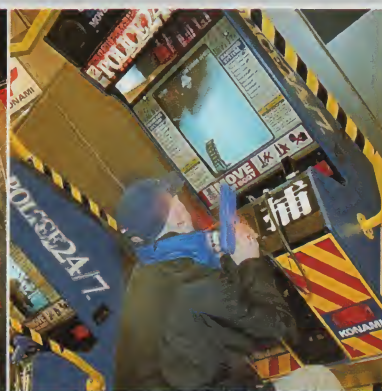
POLICE 24/7
(Konami)

The only truly innovative lightgun game on show, that would otherwise just be a A.N. Other *Time Crisis* clone differentiates itself from the pack by successfully implementing motion-sensing technology. The player must physically duck and strafe to shelter behind tables and around corners, thus evading enemy fire. There's the opportunity to rise through the ranks of the police department although anyone with dodgy knees need not apply.
☐ Chances of a PS2 release: **Low**

THRILL DRIVE 2
(Konami)

The graphics are still sketchy on the sequel to this much underrated cult racing game, but Konami claims *Thrill Drive 2* is only 60% complete. The aim is to speed blindly through darkness and fog, haunted by the piercing screams of crash victims while attempting to avoid mangling your vehicle in a 'serious accident'. At the end of it all, you're judged on manners, IQ and desire. JG Ballard would have a field day.
☐ Chances of a PS2 release: **Fair**

FIGHTING MANIA
(Konami)

Realising that their musical Bemani games were becoming too esoteric, Konami shelved its plans for *Harpsichord Mania* and instead reverted to a universally understood theme – senseless brutal physical violence. Six pads periodically spring forward from the cabinet and it's your task to punch them back to whence they came. A crap 2D on-screen boss rates your performance taking speed and strength into account.
☐ Chances of a PS2 release: **Nonexistent**

ATEI REPORT

→ particularly exciting product on Namco's ATEI stand is telling. "Namco does produce and distribute a wide range of equipment and videogames are only a small part of the total product range," shrugs Lister, before going on to talk about growing markets in the Middle East and Africa. So if Namco is still making money somewhere, it's not going to lose much sleep.

Konami always seems to forge a very singular path and the invention of *Beatmania* was a masterstroke. As games become more physical Konami's Bemani heritage puts it ahead of the pack. Despite the failure of Bemani games to translate to a reserved UK audience, the company remains positive.

"We're lucky because the R&D teams out in Japan are very talented," says Marketing Manager Lucy Ward. "They're always creating innovative arcade machines that keep the public interested. We're the first company to produce true motion sensing games and I think *Police 24/7* is going to be massive, as big as *Silent Scope*. Sure, our games are becoming more tactile and more physical. Konami is very aware of the changes in the market – coin-op consumption is probably diminishing overall but that hasn't affected Konami because we continue to innovate." Ward also claims that Konami leads the way in Britain in terms of marketing and promoting its products.

"We've matured with the market. Competitions have proved successful. At the *Euro Mix/Final Judgement* internet competition finals held in the Trocadero over the summer we had 250 spectators watching the action."

Ultimately, though, this is only a tentative toe in the water of the PR ocean where consumer divisions happily bathe. As for the other two major companies, Midway doesn't have a dedicated UK arcade operation (despite its titles heading to PS2) while Sega is just unhelpful. However, the latter still produces more coin-op machines than any other, mostly of high quality, and has been consistently converting their arcade successes for home consumption on the Dreamcast. The news that Sega will now develop for PS2 can only be a very good thing indeed.

//There are still a few videogame gems to be found at ATEI//

The power of PS2, both in terms of software quality and marketing savvy, may be too much for the arcade industry. Coin-op developers may be lured by the touch-screen dollar, arcade videogames be banished to the family megaplexes and theme parks, and the games themselves may increasingly rely on novelty to attract custom. Yet a feeling persists that games such as *Arctic Thunder* and *Smashing Drive* will lose vitality in translation to the consoles. There's still nothing like climbing aboard a custom-made cabinet and gripping the handlebars or steering wheel for dear life as your body tenses in preparation for a psychedelic supersonic arcade game assault. □

Konami's *Para Para Paradise* – a Japanese version for PlayStation 2 is on the cards.

SEGA SPORTS JAM
(Sega Wow)

From the clearly insane makers of *Sega Bass Fishing*, *Brave Firefighters* and *Emergency Call Ambulance* comes the frankly upsetting *Sega Sports Jam*. Here 12 sports are bastardised into bizarre mini-games presided over by a hyperactive commentator. Football is reduced to curling banana kicks through hoops into the goal, American football involves a *Track & Field*-style button-bashing sprint to the touchline and basketball requires you to set sniper sights on the hoop. Utterly nonsensical and therefore hugely entertaining, especially in two-player.
□ Chances of a PS2 release: **Low**

KICK AND KICK
(Konami)

The latest variation on those football-on-a-chain games which never seem to work properly. Here the screen also doubles at the target area and at last seems to register shots accurately. This means *Kick And Kick* reasonably recreates the tension of a penalty shootout as well as providing all kinds of bizarre kick strength exams. The hyperactive commentator never lets up and he becomes particularly agitated when defenders form walls at free kicks. "It's like a monolith suddenly appeared in the middle of the pitch!" he froths, disturbingly.
□ Chances of a PS2 release: **Nonexistent**

THE GRID
(Midway)

A unique third-person deathmatch shooter set in the kind of psychedelic arenas which resemble the result of Laurence Llewellen-Bowen's efforts to spruce up *Unreal Tournament*. Robo-gimp characters are controlled by a combination of trackball and joystick allowing you to move and aim in different directions simultaneously; weapons spew suitably comic bursts of fluorescent phlegm. Up to six machines can be linked to create a thoroughly entertaining circus of carnage. Expect a next gen version for PS2 in 2002.
□ Chances of a PS2 release: **Confirmed**

SMASHING DRIVE
(Gaelco)

Gaelco trumped Namco last year when *Football Power* proved to be a far more effective take on the latter's *World Kicks* concept. Now the only European coin-op developer of note (Gaelco is based in Spain) has upset the form book once again with this commendably chaotic racer emerging as one of the games of ATEI. Essentially *Crazy Taxi* with checkpoints, your cab weaves a treacherous path through rush hour traffic, benefiting from the stupidest short cuts and most preposterous power-ups imaginable.
□ Chances of a PS2 release: **Low**

The photo-realistic stylings of *The Getaway* – and yes, these are in-game shots!

WORDS: MIKE GOLDSMITH

LONDON CALLING

There have been crime-based games, there have been crime-based driving games and there have been crime-based driving games set in realistic cities – so why are SCEE's Team SoHo development house making another one? *OPS2* meets the makers of The *Getaway* to find out how they aim to bring crime back to the city.

Meet Mark Hammond, the man you'll be taking for a little drive...
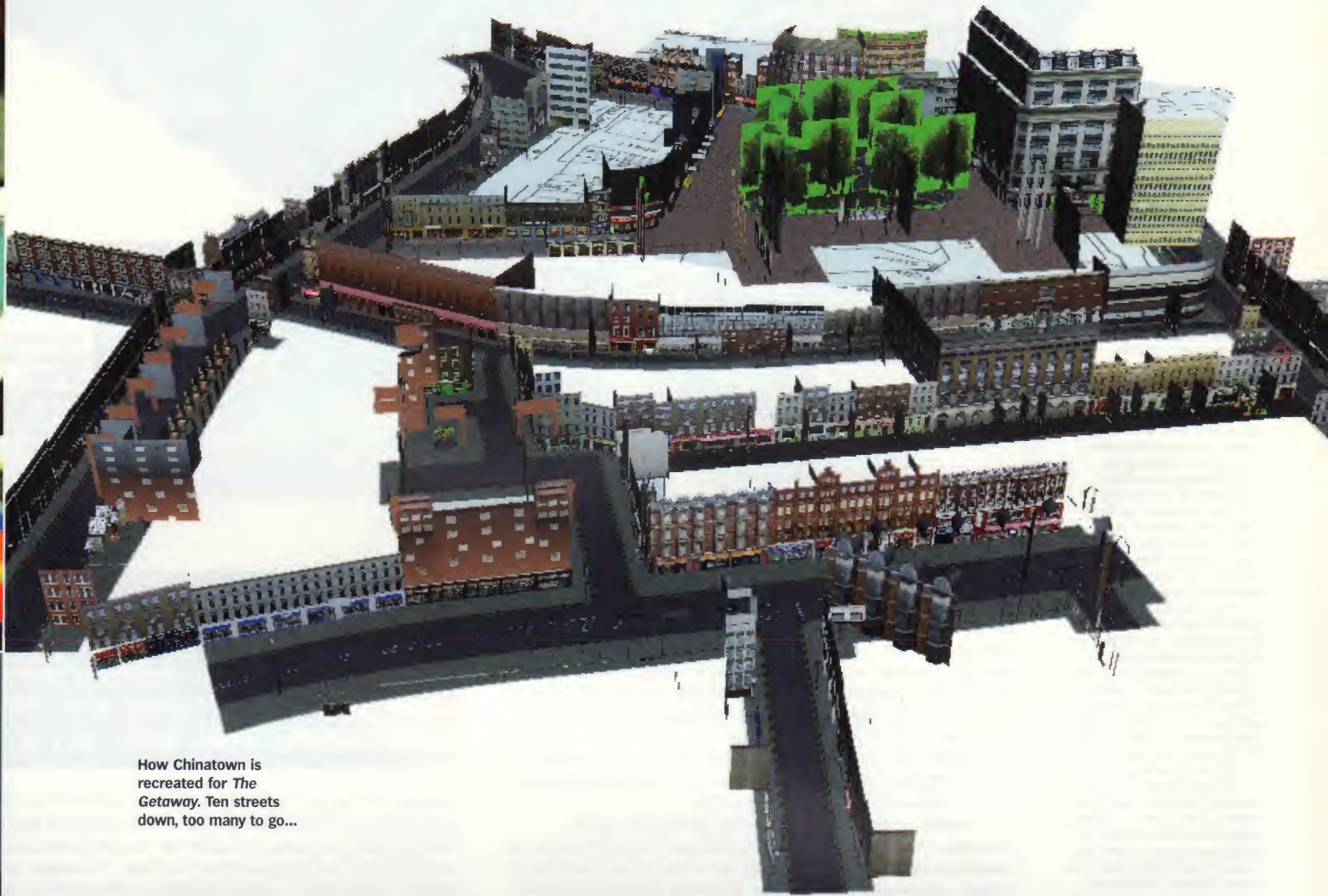
How Chinatown is recreated for *The Getaway*. Ten streets down, too many to go...

◎ it used to be that only certain people liked British gangster flicks. Yes, your dad made an effort to stay up when *The Long Good Friday* made a rare appearance and your arty brother might've rattled on about *Get Carter*'s underlying commentary on the death of the Sixties, but at the end of the day, they just weren't that, well, popular.

You'll have probably spotted things are a bit different these days. Guy Ritchie's *Snatch* has just been the subject of the biggest Hollywood launch party ever and *Get Carter*'s been remade by Rambo. And no-one mention that *Lock, Stock* TV show. The underground is overground, the cult is mainstream and if you don't like it, no-one's gonna give a damn when Vinnie Jones takes off your kneecaps with a sawn-off. Hell, they'd probably spoof it on *So Graham Norton*.

"There's something to be said for the loveable rogue and the kind of mythical East End values that get portrayed in soaps. One thing that is very important to all of these characters is the very dry, ironic sense of humour. I think this is particularly English and it comes across in the films..."

OPS2 is speaking to Brendan McNamara, expatriate Aussie, head of SCEE's Team SoHo development studio and Game Director of Sony UK's great bright hope for the PlayStation 2 – *The Getaway*. In development for the last two years, it is a cinematic driving/action game set in a photo-realistic London – or more specifically, the gangland-infested heartland of the capital's East End. The game's plot tells the story of Mark Hammond – a reformed member of Soho-based gang, the Collins Crew. The murder of Hammond's wife and subsequent kidnapping of his son brings him reluctantly into clutches of one Charlie Jolson, ageing criminal mastermind

and head of the East End's infamous Bethnal Green mob for the last 30 years. Framed for the murder of his wife and forced to run driving jobs for Jolson in order to see his son Alex alive, Mark is on the run from the police, rival gangs (the 14K Triads, the Collins Crew, the Yardies) but all the time hoping to double-cross the man who controls him and get his son back.

The Getaway also tells the tale of Frank Carter, a vigilante cop suspended from the Flying Squad for the rule-bending he's used in his obsessive quest to bring Jolson to justice. Jolson's controlling Hammond. Carter's after Jolson. Carter's also after Hammond but then Hammond is after Jolson as well. The Flying Squad are after Jolson, Hammond and probably Carter. And the gangs? The gangs are after everyone...

It gets complicated after this, by the way.

SO WHAT DO YOU DO?
If that's what the plot's all about, then what do you actually do? You drive. And you don't drive. And you shoot. And you run.

McNamara explains, "You can get out of your car at any time," says the Team Director, head-to-trainer surf togs revealing his pre-London homeland. "As long as the car has come to a halt. You can't just jump out when it's moving. Similarly, you have to stop a car that you wish to take if it's not parked. Just standing in front of it won't do as if the traffic is moving quickly you can get run over and take damage. It also pays to learn the flow of the city – if you're stuck in traffic in Soho, it might pay to get out the car and run to some larger streets where the traffic is flowing and grab another car.

"On foot, you have lots of gameplay choices from full-on confrontation to getting stealthily to your next destination. If you go down Oxford Street all ▣

IF SIXTIES WERE NINETIES
So when's *The Getaway* set? The present. With a bit of the past. And other bits from in-between. Let us explain.

Just as today's British gangster flicks mix and match the Sixties and Nineties for the necessary 'out of time' style, so does *The Getaway*. Accurately-modelled cars include everything from classic Bentleys and Jensen interceptors to modern day Porsches and Rovers, while the clothes are a modern take on classic gangster style, designed for *The Getaway* by fêted London designer, Ted Baker. *The Getaway*'s Simon Wood explains why.

"We purposely designed the game to show different cultures and generations, so naturally you will see everything possible attached to different time scales, its bound to happen," explains Woody. "From the old run-down buildings in South London to the grand mansions in Mayfair to the new cosmopolitan area of Soho."

But will it look out of place?

"Look at London, it's got a continual battle with period and modern architecture, cars, clothes, sounds and attitudes, which is precisely what you get with *The Getaway*. Take Charlie Jolson. He has an image of London and wants to return to it and so does his crew. They're the old fashioned types. The other gangs are more modern so naturally their attitudes and clothes will reflect this."

Best not to argue.

guns blazing, the Police arrive quickly. Your only way out might be to take a hostage and escape in a car chase. You could alternatively try and keep a low profile, and grab a car from a back street without attracting much attention. This might sound like less fun but I think this is where the story helps give the player motivation for what they are doing. Story has always been seen as constraint to gameplay freedom and for a long while, I was in this camp as well. I think it's exciting and refreshing that *The Getaway*'s story works and yet doesn't constrain the player."

To paraphrase, it's a bit like *Driver* and a bit like *Grand Theft Auto* but with Brit gangster knobs on. An incredibly harsh and reductive summation, but one McNamara's team have been expecting.

"I wouldn't say that we are worried about either game," laughs McNamara. "I've got a healthy respect for both games, which I'm a big fan of. However, we have some pretty lofty goals for this project. We're not trying to deliver a cartoon experience of London. We're trying to do something gritty and realistic but still have good gameplay values. I think the press and the buying public will sort out for us whether we are being derivative or taking the next step in the evolution of videogames. I know what we think." Beyond McNamara's admirable boasting, he's got a point. Although obviously

It's not just London's streets that are realistically represented. The various locations have all been scouted and captured.

//The problem the gaming press had with *The Getaway* was the screenshots. They were too real//

hampered by what they could achieve on PSone, both *Driver* and *GTA* have only delivered an approximation of a 'real' criminal experience. Both games have looked like, well, *games* with all the 'fun' that comes from pulling handbrake turns and offing pedestrians on a whim. *The Getaway* constantly strives for realism and the tactical gameplay that will bring for the player – from the Ordnance Survey data brought in to accurately map the capital's streets to the character scans used to create *The Getaway*'s in-game cast to the photographed streets that make up the game's rich and detailed London environment.

Ah, those photographs.

SO IS IT REAL?
Since *The Getaway* first reared its head last year, it was the subject of much speculation in the gaming press. The reported gameplay wasn't the problem. The problem was the screenshots. They were just too real. Every shot published was just so damn realistic, it looked like Team SoHo had just stuck a digital camera out of the window, fired off a few shots and then manipulated the image by putting a car on top. Indeed, the fact that some screenshots *did* show the streets and shops outside Team SoHo's windows didn't exactly do them any favours.

So the question – are those screenshots real? The answer is an unequivocal yes. *OPS2* visited Team SoHo's offices and watched various members of the team launch cars around a virtual London stored on a PS2 development kit. Shops look like shops, side roads look like side roads and that McDonalds at the Baker Street end of Oxford Street is there in all its glory just over the road from Selfridges. So how did the team make the streets of London look like photos? Easy. They took photos. Lots of photos.

"We've worn out two digital cameras. I dread to think how many miles the art team have walked, driven and covered by bus and Tube," laugh Sam Coates, ex-architect and *The Getaway*'s Lead Artist. "There's no real secret to the process. We go out in teams of two and shoot the pictures, one street at a time. The order of development follows gameplay level order pretty closely so the map grows with the game. The building interiors are all done in the same way. Early in the morning, the team descends with cameras, video equipment and lights and shoots every little detail so we (hopefully) never have to go back. From that point on it's all down to the artists to make the best of what they have – plus add a bit of style."

Bespoke suits from Ted Baker have been scanned in for that realistic feel.

THE GETAWAY

Half Mike Reid, half Telly Savalas... Meet cover star Charlie Jolson.

The photo-realism of the buildings must be matched by the people and furniture that populate it.
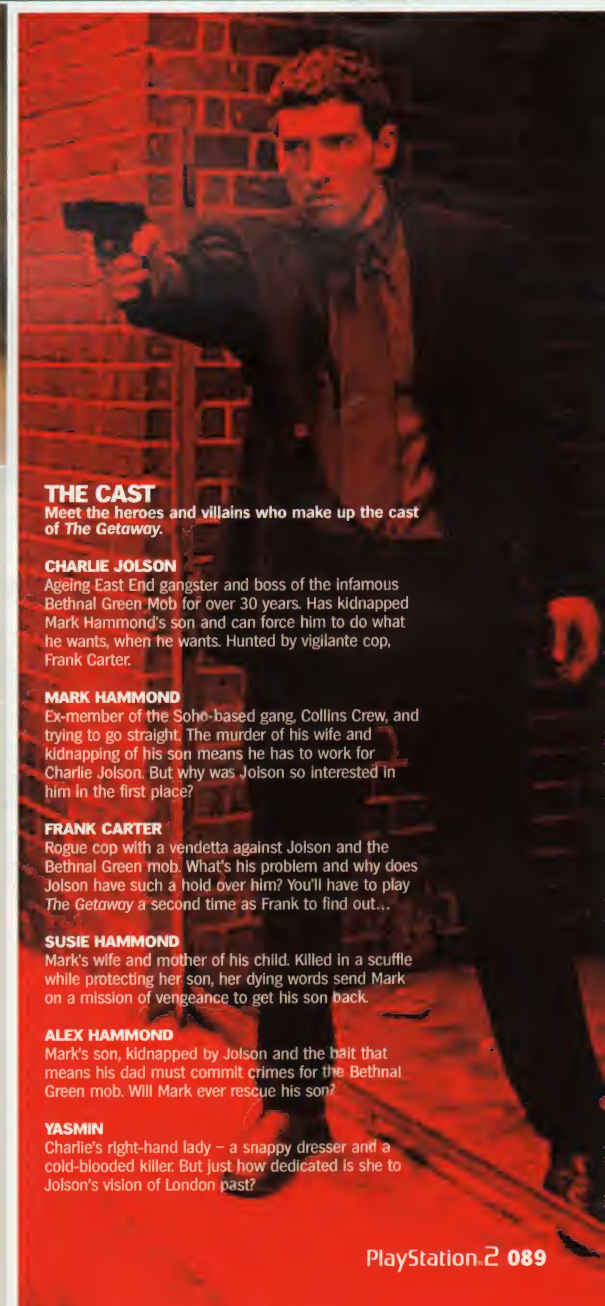
How To Create A Character: A Masterclass. First, model your skull...

Next, scan in your victim's head from all possible angles and splay..

Now, mix and match et voila – your gorgeous assassin lives!

front.ss3d

Sensitivity 0.5

30 Objects

Individual objects

objects: 18   # vertices: 110254   # faces: 106704

Camera

Rotor mode relative   Zoom   Light   Light

View custom

61.6211507
74.4486531

THE CAST
Meet the heroes and villains who make up the cast of *The Getaway*.

CHARLIE JOLSON
Ageing East End gangster and boss of the infamous Bethnal Green Mob for over 30 years. Has kidnapped Mark Hammond's son and can force him to do what he wants, when he wants. Hunted by vigilante cop, Frank Carter.

MARK HAMMOND
Ex-member of the Soho-based gang, Collins Crew, and trying to go straight. The murder of his wife and kidnapping of his son means he has to work for Charlie Jolson. But why was Jolson so interested in him in the first place?

FRANK CARTER
Rogue cop with a vendetta against Jolson and the Bethnal Green mob. What's his problem and why does Jolson have such a hold over him? You'll have to play *The Getaway* a second time as Frank to find out...

SUSIE HAMMOND
Mark's wife and mother of his child. Killed in a scuffle while protecting her son, her dying words send Mark on a mission of vengeance to get his son back.

ALEX HAMMOND
Mark's son, kidnapped by Jolson and the bait that means his dad must commit crimes for the Bethnal Green mob. Will Mark ever rescue his son?

YASMIN
Charlie's right-hand lady – a snappy dresser and a cold-blooded killer. But just how dedicated is she to Jolson's vision of London past?

THE GETAWAY

Don't expect shop logos to be replaced with 'spoof' versions – *The Getaway* will keep everything as it really is.

How To Create A Car: A Masterclass. First, take photos of said auto...
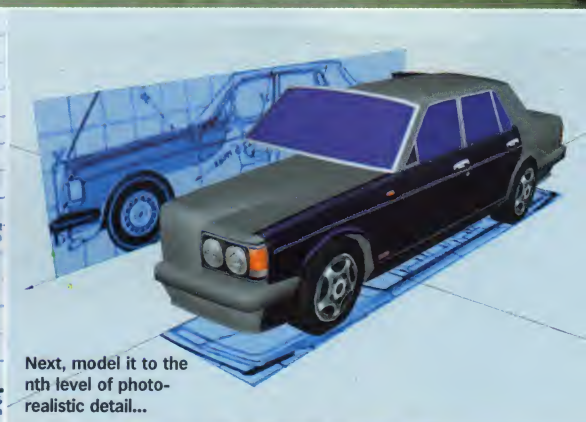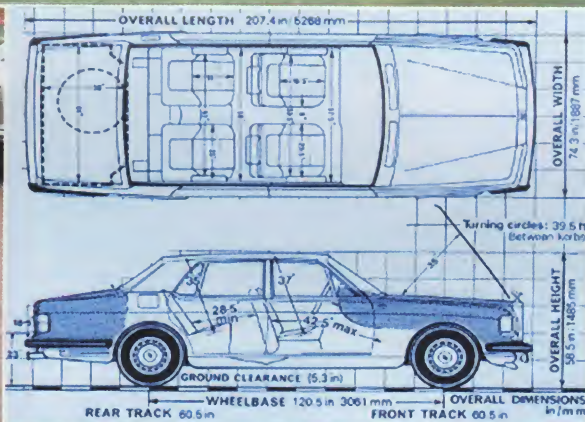
Next, model it to the nth level of photo-realistic detail...

Finally, stick it in the game and no-one will believe it's a screenshot.

THE ORIGINAL GETAWAY

The Getaway started life back in 1998 on the original PlayStation in a different guise. Brendan McNamara and Sam Coates reveals its origins...

MCNAMARA: "We originally had the idea about two years ago. We had experience of doing racing games from *Porsche Challenge* and *Rapid Racer* and the team wanted to do another. It took a while to get it focused but the concept took off when we switched to the getaway driver for a gang of jewel thieves. We had a pretty good game on PSone before we switched to PS2."

COATES: "The game was focused on driving with no on-foot section. London was only one of five levels and the map covered only 10-20% of the area it does now. Also, the story line and characters in the PS2 version are all new so I think you can safely say you're getting better value for money with *The Getaway* on PS2. Who knows, we may even hide the PSone prototype on the DVD somewhere…"

How *The Getaway* would've looked on PSone – nice, but not the same.

From photo (left) to wireframe (above) to in-game shot (far left) – Chinatown in all its glory.

It's a process that makes for an incredible level of detail – you'll be able to read the film posters in cinema foyers and see food ads in shop windows – but one that creates a rod for the art department's back. If only it were a case of sticking a few photos onto building models.

"Sometimes the photo-realistic look gets us into trouble," continues Coates. "People don't appreciate how much effort is required to keep a consistent look. We can't have buildings next door to each other where you can tell the pictures were taken on different days for example."

The ramifications of this approach are even more problematic for the in-game characters. If your environment is going to look real, then you can't populate it with traditional polygonal figures. Now, the cars have to look real, the heroes have to look real, the lampposts have to look real...
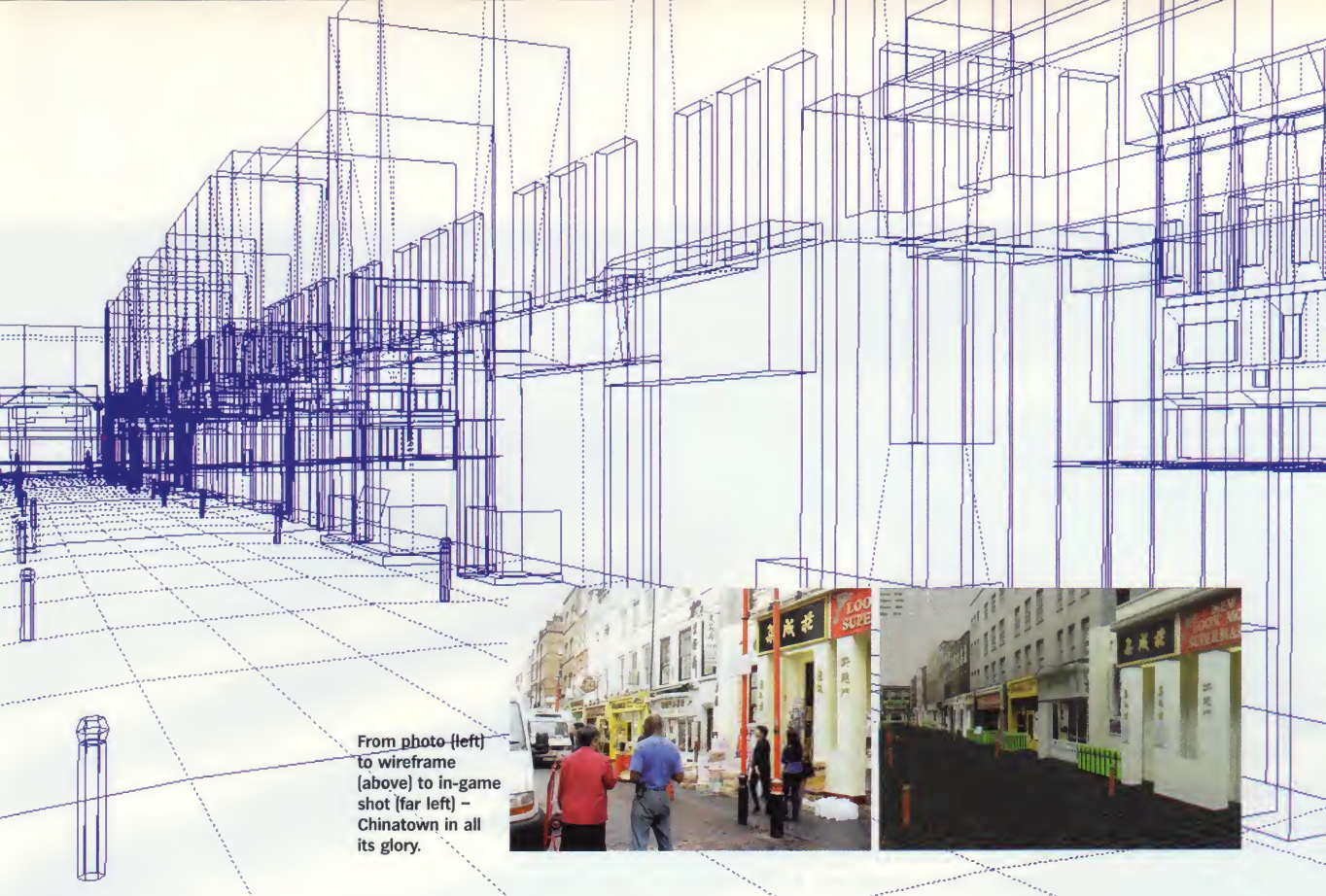
"The real issue is knowing when to stop," considers Coates. "Staying focused on which details improve the game and which make it worse. It's too easy to assume that you just point the camera and off comes the perfect texture. The street furniture in The Getaway is a good example. To be honest, none of it is that accurate. In real life, crash barriers, lampposts, traffic lights, are all found on the best driving line – no good for gameplay.

"It took us three attempts to find the right process and technology to create characters that sit in the scene well but it was worth it and we're very pleased with the results. But, of course, you then have these great looking

//"The real issue is knowing when to stop..." Sam Coates, Lead Artist on The Getaway//

character models which have to animate equally convincingly with all the range and variety of real people."

The realism of The Getaway's characters have been achieved by Talking Heads – a bespoke piece of software written by The Getaway's Senior Animator, Gavin Moore. Once the actors' faces have been scanned in and moulded on to accurately-measured skull models, Moore can recreate real expressions with Talking Heads – fear, anger, surprise and so on. After that, it's up to the art department to make the characters look good. Simon Wood is The Getaway's Art Director, having moved to Team SoHo after working on various Bond films, Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace and even the sadly-aborted big screen version of Thunderbirds.

"When I first started designing the main characters, the costumes became a crucial issue due to the realism," explains 'Woody', his Thrasher T-shirt revealing a full indoctrination into the gaming industry. "We realised early on, that we needed to actually get clothes in and scan them. We

turned to Brendan and told him and he said, "Fine. Who's the best British men and women's designer that can get us these clothes?" I told him Ted Baker and Karen Millen. Now we have a deal with these guys and all the main characters are dressed in their clothes. It got that chaotic with actors and extras we had to get in a costume designer to help match the visuals... Thank God."

THE LOWDOWN

It's obvious from the enthusiasm exhibited by Team SoHo that they intend The Getaway to be more than a driving/action hybrid. The game isn't just set in a city, it's set in a virtual London that has been painstakingly constructed from over 25,000 photographs with over a third of the streets to go. The narrative isn't just a bolted-on plot, it's been fully-scripted, played out by 16 actors and then modelled and animated for the numerous cinematic cut-scenes. The Getaway's core dev team now tops 43 (think Konami or Square's huge teams rather than the usual BritSoft dozen or so) and the budget has run into the millions.

By the time that 'time' is finally called on The Getaway, the game will have taken three years to make, over 30,000 photographs of research and left a considerable dent in Sony UK's development budget. It also leaves Team SoHo with countless miles of London sat on a hard drive. As you'd imagine, it's not likely to sit there for long.

"There's nothing else stopping us from mapping the whole of the city although I think the art team will need a little break before they ever look at another brick wall again," laughs Sam Coates. "There are some loose plans and sketch ideas of where we'd like to take the play area. Personally I'd love to move out further east and I think the railway arches and run down areas behind King's Cross would fit the vibe nicely. However I think more new and exciting interiors will probably be our main focus next time round. There are loads of bits of London we'd like to show you and loads of seedy and sleazy hang-outs that would make for an interesting game world, once we start on a sequel/prequel. We'll see where the story takes us..."

Simon Wood concurs with the obviously-researched idea of a sequel ("Brendan has got me to look into the prequel for The Getaway and finish that, but that's light-years away!") but the rest of the team understandably have other ideas. "The team want to go on the road and do other cities. Rio, Sydney and numerous others have been suggested," laughs McNamara. "But I think the likelihood is that we will keep adding to London. There's miles of it still out there and we haven't done every single street. There's also only 24 interior locations in the game and in the future, we'd like to add to that. We may do this by releasing episodes but nothing has been decided yet. We're well aware that we have got live up to our own expectations and those of the public before we commence planning sequels."

It used to be that only certain people liked British gangster flicks. The Getaway's team are doing their utmost to make sure that anyone who doesn't will be convinced otherwise. And if you don't agree, expect a visit from a certain Mr Jolson. □

WORDS: JON JORDAN/PHOTOGRAPHY: MARTIN BURTON

COMPOSE YOURSELF

No other PSone game gave you the chance to let your creative juices flow as Codemasters' *Music* did. Creating your own mini masterpieces was as addictive as *PaRappa The Rapper* and ten times as rewarding. Now developer Jester Interactive is to return with an enhanced PS2 version, *MTV Music Generator*.

Outside Abbey Road studios, graffiti adorns the facade. 'John Rules' exclaims one scrawl. 'Hey Jude' says another. Groups of Japanese tourists wander the streets looking for some Fab Four action. Even 30 years after The Beatles were snapped on the zebra crossing, everyone, it seems, still loves a music maker.

Inside the hallowed doors, gold discs decorate the walls, expensive equipment clutters the corridors and Thom Yorke is rumoured to be hard at work detuning guitars in Studio Three. So why is *OPS2* here? The answer sits in the Penthouse Suite, surrounded by a massive 48-track recording desk and thousands of pounds worth of shiny speakers.

Today, the PlayStation 2, together with an electric blue CD has the potential to transport the creative power of Abbey Road's many illustrious past residents direct to your living room. The juxtaposition is amusing. Here, amongst a daunting collection of expensive state-of-the-art music equipment, Jester Interactive's *MTV Music Generator* program is demonstrating how a console will allow you to compose and record complex tracks for the price of a game and a PS2.

RHYTHM OF INVENTION

In another life, Tim Wright was a musician with bands such as Tucan and Infinite Remix Of The Third Junior – you might not have heard of them. Thankfully he moved on from playing in pubs to crafting the squeaks and whistles for games such as *Lemmings* and *Crazy Ivan* as in-house soundman at developer Psygnosis. But after a particularly long evening over a pint or two with some colleagues, real inspiration arrived.

"We looked at a lot of games ideas and then someone asked 'Why has no-one ever done a music sequencer on the PlayStation?'" Jester's creative director recalls. A back of a fag packet specification and a well-timed phone call to Sony followed, and the concept of *Music* suddenly had legs.

"We were wary at first of making a pure sequencer," Wright explains of Jester's early prototypes. "We tried to position the music sequencer within a more typical game environment. The first concept we worked was a kitchen scenario where you'd get the tin of beans down off the shelf, and they were the bass beans. Then you'd put them in a saucepan on the cooker, and the cooker was the track window. Then you'd get the rhythm cabbage..."

It didn't take too long to realise this might not be the best way to proceed. Other rejected brainstorms ideas included a playground where the angle of the children's slide controlled the BPM and a flower with notes for ⇨

This man wants to turn your PS2 into a home studio: Tim Wright, Creative Director at Jester Interactive.

Sample Editor: trancer c3 @ 44KHz

Remove DC

Current Position	065561
Edit Area	065561-133386
Zoomed Area	000001-212240
Loop Point	156240
Total Sample Size	212240

If you've got the time and energy, tweaking samples is the ideal way to make your tune stand out.

Simple volume controls mean that fades can be applied to individual songblocks or entire song segments.

Note Volume Envelope

1/8 second   X=0.057 Y=15.69

Adventurous users can go into the note volume envelope and fiddle with the sine waves. (Or you could just fiddle with them anyway.)

petals. These rightly fell by the wayside until the decision was taken to forget about making a game as such. Music's gimmick was to give anyone who could use a joypad the chance to compose their own music through their PSone. The method was simple, assign coloured 'blocks' of sound in the form of 'samples' to a pasteboard (the sequencer). Adjust the tempo, then press play and either wince at the racket or sign it to a major. Three years and a million PSone and PC sales later, Wright is sat in the producer's chair at Abbey Road happily unveiling his latest trick for PS2.

"Our unique selling point is PlayStation 2's power," he explains, reeling off figures. "We have 48 channels as opposed to 28 before, four times as much RAM, an 8MB Memory Card, a 24-speed DVD drive, 3D positional sound and 3D video." The result being that MTV Music Generator is much more versatile and has a much simplified interface.

"We've turned it on its head," Wright enthuses. "We've still got the blocks and riffs that make it friendly to use but when we looked at the review scores for previous versions, we always fared badly when it came to graphics. In some ways it's the nature of beast, but we resolved to make the work area as funky as possible." So, influenced by customisable MP3 players such as WinAmp, Jester has designed ten different 'skins' or themes, for the main sequencing screen, all based around the theme of

> // Music's gimmick was to give anyone who could use a joypad the chance to compose on a PSone//

radio. For the Fifties-themed skin, buttons resemble those on an ancient Roberts wireless. Other skins include sci-fi, submarine and hi-tech. Functionality remains the same whatever the skin chosen. There are 12 different buttons which all use the same icons for play, load, undo, fast-forward and jam but their form and location on the screen depends on the specific skin. As for assigning these functions to different controller buttons, Jester has revised its approach. "Music was a bit like Street Fighter wasn't it? Button functionality changed when you entered different modes," Wright remembers. Now Jester has plumped for a system everyone knows – the 'Windows' approach. Using the right analogue stick as a mouse pointer, tricky button combinations are a thing of the past. Files and menus are even displayed in easy-to-navigate scroll bars.

RIFF AND READY

Skins aside, the most obvious difference between MTV Music Generator and its predecessors is that the sequencing screen has been rotated through 90 degrees. Instead of tracks being played from left to right as in other popular industry music software like Cubase, it now scrolls from top to bottom.

"It was a major issue, bigger than I had envisaged," says Wright. Primarily implemented because it allows more tracks to be viewed on a widescreen TV, it remains a bold move. "People who had seen the previous versions of Music or were familiar with Cubase were like, 'it's going vertically. That's not going to work.' But they soon picked it up," explains Wright.

PS2 VERSUS PC

How does *MTV Music Generator* measure up to professional PC music applications?

There may not be any similar products to *Music* on PSone or PS2 but there are plenty for the PC and Mac. Tim Wright now reckons there is little difference between *MTV Music Generator* and professional packages such as *Cubase*, *Logic Audio* and *Cakewalk*. "We've got 48 notes of polyphony (how many notes you can play at one time) now and the software is a lot easier to use," he explains. "I know for a fact Orbital use *Music 2000*. They sit in front of the TV, work some riffs out and then go into the studio. They use it to get ideas and avoid those £200 an hour studio fees."

"The only area in which the professional packages are superior to *MTV Music Generator* concerns effects such as reverb (echo)," he continues, pointing at a metre-high rack of effects underneath the Abbey Road studio mixing desk. "We've only got the built-in effects provided with the PlayStation 2 hardware but this still allows for options such as rooms, halls and amphitheatres."

Cubase (VST 5.0, £649): Industry standard music creation package has a new digital recording engine offering 128 channels of 32 bit audio.
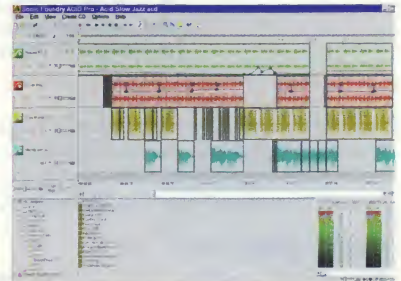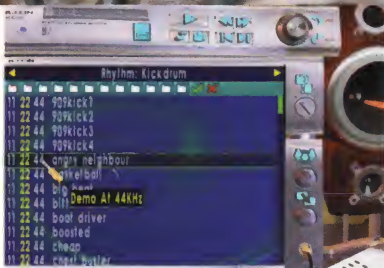
ACID (Pro 3.0, £279): Loop-based music production software, with a 'pick, paint and play' interface for added ease of use.

Logic Audio (V4.5, £549): Boasting flexible window architecture, Logic Audio is Cubase's big competitor. The latest version has a revamped sound engine.
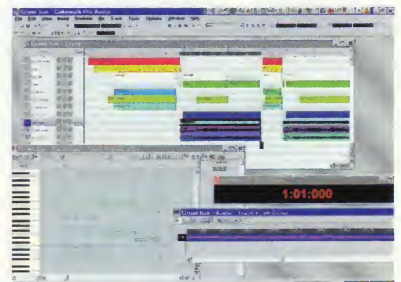
Cakewalk (Home Studio 9, £90): Claims to be the top selling home music creation software package. Cheap, but only has eight stereo playable tracks.

Old meets new in an 'I'm a better song maker than you' battle between the PS2 and a huge mixing desk.

The sample library sits at the heart of *MTV Music Generator* offering a range of instruments and weird and wonderful sound effects. Angry neighbour anyone?

The only link this generator has to the MTV channel is the name that it licenced out.

Despite initial scepticism, it's fair to say that the rejigged workspace works very well. This is abetted by the fact that Jester has also tightened up the way tracks are created. "*Music* was confusing enough for some people when there were only 24 tracks to play with," says Wright. "They'd go to the riff library and pick a rhythm but they didn't know where to put it. We thought we'd break the process down. If you think about any song, every part basically fits into the category of bass, rhythm, melody or vocals."

So Jester has colour-coded each type of sound to a specific track. Rhythm songblocks and riffs are red, bass sounds are blue, melodies are green and vocals are yellow. When you begin a song, only four tracks – one per colour – are available to use. Try to drop a vocal block into the bass track and like a square peg in a round hole, it just won't go. "It helps to give some direction to inexperienced users," says Wright. However, this feature doesn't prejudice the adept. Once you fill a bass track, another appears in the window. Unless you reach the 48-track limit, there's always an open track for each of the four sound categories.

Integrating the video element of the package has been high on Jester's list of priorities. A powerful tool in its own right, the need to move between screens in the previous versions of *Music* proved to be too big an obstacle for many users." People would finish a track and only then think about making a video," says Wright. "They'd try to use the Video mode for a bit but then just choose the automatically generated option." Now the video component is displayed and can be previewed in the same workspace as ⮕

MTV MUSIC GENERATOR

The work area in *MTV Music Generator* has been turned on its side with the tracks scrolling up the screen as they play.
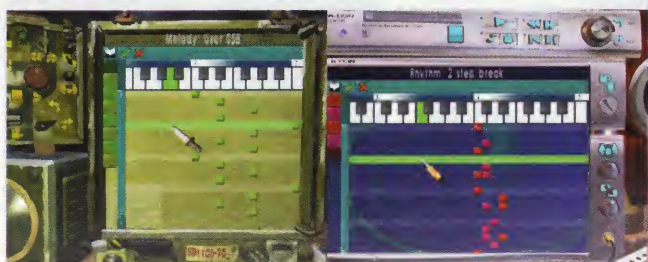
The Riff Editor is fully integrated into the main work area and allows you to create custom riffs using a six octave keyboard.

Complete with obligatory Japanese Beatles fans, Abbey Road studios was a fitting location for the launch of *MTV Music Generator*.

the music. And just as the music section of the program is split into discrete tracks, so too is the video. Camera movement and lighting options can all be simply selected and because they are displayed on the same workspace, it's easy to see how the music and video components relate to each other.

LOOP DREAMS

Music gained its reputation thanks to the care Jester took with the key ingredients of any sequencer – the samples. "This time we concentrated on *Music 2000*'s weaknesses," explains Wright. "We booked a group called Hornography and got into real horns. They did saxophone, trombone, trumpet, flute, cupped effects and horn trio sounds." Jester has also concentrated on the previously lacking rock and indie genres.

"We've been more considered in our approach," he says, referring to the 20 vocal tracks, which were written, recorded and cut into pieces. "You can put them back together to form a complete song." The same is true for the guitar sounds; big-hair power chords rub plectrums with acoustic strums. "There are 9,860 samples in *MTV Music Generator* compared to about 3,600 for *Music 2000*," he says. Perhaps mindful of his location, Wright adds, "if you've got Oasis sheet music, you could even rewrite *Wonderwall*."

Music may be a global success story in videogame terms but Wright still has plenty of creative ambition. "I wish that one major artist who, when asked how they began writing music, will reply, 'Oh, there was this package on the PlayStation…' My head would just swell up and burst."

But until that dream is fulfiled Wright is still surprised at the situations in which *Music* rears its head. "I was contacted by one woman asking for some tips because she was using the program with deaf kids," he recalls. "Despite my disbelief, it wasn't a wind-up. They can feel the bass apparently." Wright also discovered a North Wales nightclub that found an imaginative use for *Music*. "They were using the Video mode in some of their projections. We tracked them down and found they were playing a bootleg copy," Wright says. "We thought, 'Shall we dob them in?' We decided against it in the end because they had the Jester logo on every video they used."

This somehow seems to be as appropriate a testimony to *Music*'s success as you could hope for – making the deaf feel the bass and the wasted move to the groove. Just imagine what *MTV Music Generator* can do with three times the power. □

The game's different themes or 'skins' provide a cosmetic variety to the interface. The cursor changes accordingly so in the army skin it's a knife, in the Jester skin it's a guitar, and in the sci-fi skin it's a rocket ship.

INPUT/OUTPUT
It's all a question of leads.

One person happy with the inclusion of a composite output lead in the PS2 box is Tim Wright. "Composite gives you video and left and right audio," he explains. "It's great, because if you wanted to record your *Music* tracks on PSone you had to buy a splitter lead separately. With the composite lead you can just stick the left and right audio into your hi-fi and record onto cassette or MiniDisc."

The general availability of PCs with soundcards means that the purchase of a simple converter allows users to connect to a PC and convert tracks created with *MTV Music Generator* to MP3 format.

And as for the future? "When Sony release the Hard Disk Drive and the PlayStation 2 Web site is up and running, we can think about revising *MTV Music Generator* and providing additional functions – maybe so it has MP3 built-in," Wright says.

Sony's refusal to allow the sampling of CDs in this version of *Music* has left Jester with a problem it is trying to work around. "The official line is that we can't sanction sampling from the PS2's internal CD player," Wright explains. "However, PlayStation 2 works as an audio amplifier so we're looking at the option to do something with the USB port." This could simply mean an adaptor lead which would allow you to connect a number of different musical devices (including CD player, MiniDisc player and even decks) to PS2 for sampling purposes. It's a grey area at the moment but Jester hopes to be able to announce a solution soon.

KNOCKOUT KINGS 2001

Lennox vs Ali. A true winner?

›› Turn over for the fight of your life...

REVIEWS

The latest PlayStation 2 games − reviewed and rated

OPS2 review ratings

If it's for PlayStation 2, and heading for a store near you, we've played it, argued about it, and, ultimately, judged it. Every issue, we look at the latest games and rate them out of 10:

10/10	Utterly essential
9/10	Hugely satisfying and entertaining
8/10	Highly recommended. Definitely worth your money
7/10	Good, solid fare, and well worth a gander
6/10	Better than average, and fine for fans of the genre
5/10	An average game of some merit
4/10	Poor, but may still have the odd moment
3/10	Extremely disappointing
2/10	To be avoided
1/10	Beer mat

The OPS2 StarPlayer award
Awarded to any game that gets 9/10 or over. This is just our little way of trying to hammer home what is a fairly simple message: Get this game, and get it now.

Game reviews

Media reviews

Knockout Kings 2001 features visually stunning fighters captured from the best boxing talent in the world.

KNOCKOUT KINGS 2001

EA Sports' big-name boxing sim prances onto PS2 with much Ali swagger.

The boxers are realistic but the audience are still cut out of the soggiest cardboard..

Publisher:
EA Sports
Developer:
EA Sports
Price: £ 39.99
Players: 1-2
Out: Now
Web site:
www.easports.ea.com

Back story
The PS2 debut of EA's short-running boxing sim series. The original appeared on PSone in 1998, and was revamped to iron out scrappiness, and bring it more into line with the ethos of the EA Sports branding (universal design, officially licenced fighters and commentators and a Classic Fights option).

In the first years of the PSone era, no-one thought to release a boxing game. When it came to honourable one-on-one combat, all eyes were Eastward for the likes of *Tekken*, *Toshinden* and *Street Fighter*. It took an astonishing three years before any developers got around to dropping the high-kicks and restaging the knuckle-thrusting according to the Marquis Of Queensbury.

The problem is that boxing is tight, technical and strategic – and it's often more about the build-up than the actual event, remember last year's Tyson-in-the-UK circus? You have to choose your market – either fight fans or boxing bores and stick with a style (arcade or sim). With the release of *Knockout Kings 2001*, the PS2 now has one of each. *Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2* is strictly arcade – a crowd-pleaser packed with OTT ethnic 'characters' and comedy cosmetics. KK2001 is more of a sim with representations of genuine boxers, a sense of the sport's history but, until someone conceives an entirely new approach, it's also proof that the arcade way is the only way, playability-wise.

For all of its novelty appeal, the original *Knockout Kings* had a major flaw: It was too easy to just pick a reasonable fighter and slug your way to the top. It's like convincing an elderly relative to take you on at *Tekken*, only to have your lovingly cultivated combos thwarted by their insistence on hammering the buttons at random. Although this element has been significantly toned down across both sequels, the fact that it hasn't been play-tested out of existence altogether is poor. The inclusion of real-world, modern-day boxing superstars is severely soured by the fact that Oscar De La Hoya can be beaten by standing right next to him and repeatedly alternating between uppercut and right-hook. A little AI wouldn't have gone amiss.

DUCKING AND DIVING
The game starts well enough: the EA Sports intro with its soothing, BBC-style credibility; a cute multi-angle fight montage set to some suitably thumping hip-hop and a clear, no-fuss mode menu prettied up with an impressively rendered shadow-boxer. Character graphics have naturally been upgraded in line with the generational step-up. The boxer models, with vivid body texture and muscle definition, are more fluid and authentic – bobbing and moving with just the right amount of arrogance. Since many of the guest stars were captured with 3D laser-scan, they not only have

A quick jab to the left catches his chin and he's spread-eagled on the canvas watching tiny stars gently spin about his head. You, however, are crowned King Of The World and thrown bags of money.

THE GREATEST
No Mike Tyson, then. But plenty of true class in all the divisions.

HEAVYWEIGHT
Muhammad Ali
Born: 17 January 1942
Record: Won **56**; Lost **5**; Won by KO **37**
Specialities: Jab (body), Cross (head), Rear Uppercut (head).

The undisputed Greatest Of All Time™, Ali is probably the only fighter in history whose boasts are based in reality. Icon, diplomat, spokesman, poet... and boxer. The fastest hands and feet in heavyweight history.

HEAVYWEIGHT
Jack Dempsey
Born: 24 June 1895, **Died:** 4 May 1983
Record: Won **61**; Lost **6**; Drew **8**; Won by KO **51**
Specialities: Lead hook (head), Lead hook (body).

In the roaring Twenties, 'The Manassa Mauler' became the first boxing superstar. He fought from an unorthodox, crouching position, beating opponents with brutal bursts of power. Dempsey famously won two crucial fights after being knocked down twice.

MIDDLEWEIGHT
Oscar De La Hoya
Born: 4 February 1973
Record: Won **32**; Lost **2**; Won by KO **26**
Specialities: Lead hook (head), Lead hook (body), Jab (head).

'The Golden Boy' is, pound-for-pound, one of the best in the world. A tenacious, heavy-hitter, he has a lethal left-hand which, notoriously, shattered the legendary Julio Caesar Chavez's nose.
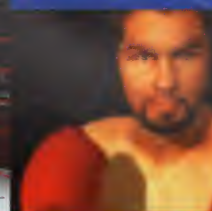
LIGHTWEIGHT
Roberto Duran
Born: 16 June 1951
Record: Won **103**; Lost **15**; Won by KO **69**
Specialities: Lead hook (body), Lead hook (head), Cross (head).

'Hands Of Stone' was one of nine kids raised by his mother in grim poverty. His is the classic tale of a poor boy dragging himself out of the gutter and into the glory of the ring.

THE LADIES
Mia St John
Born: 24 June 1967
Record: Won **16**; Lost **0**; Won by KO **9**
Specialities: Jab (head), Cross (head), Lead hook (head).

St John is a 5ft 6in karate expert who once posed for Playboy and, experts sneer, is little more than a boxing sideshow. She made her pro debut in 1997 with no previous amateur experience.

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the right body-shape, but their facial features are actually recognisable, with even the occasional hint of personality (as opposed to the usual thousand-yard stare). Better still, as all *Ready 2 Rumble* fans will enjoy, those delicate looks can be rearranged: noses bleed, cheeks bruise and swell, eyes redden, cuts open... and widen.

Overall though, the graphical quality has been emphasised at the expense of some bizarre quirks of animation and collision detection (jump-cuts and punches 'ghosting' through head and body). The *look* might be great, but the *feel* doesn't always match. This can't just be passed off as a stylistic niggle, as it frequently impairs the game. For example, in the training section you can be explicitly carrying out your trainer's instruction, but, for whatever reason, the contact isn't registered. Again – hello, play-testers?

Although the action is competent it is still surprisingly dour for something so potentially

//Delicate looks can be rearranged. Noses bleed, eyes redden, cuts open...//

enjoyable as two large men hitting each other until one of them falls over. All the moves are there – jab, cross, hook, uppercut... – with all the usual bobbing, dodging and satisfyingly rule-bending features. But the button-to-action response is unforgivably soupy – the high polygon-count is a weak excuse, as it's barely an issue with other, equally complex fighting games. Boxer control isn't bad (standard blows from the usual buttons, hold down ⬛ and ⬛ buttons to mix in body-punches and lunges) but, as ever, because of the sluggishness, there's a tendency to just find a routine that works and then stick with it.

VARYING YOUR PUMMELLING
A problem with the previous two games was the difficulty in chaining together head and body shots to form unpredictable, difficult-to-block combos. This has been addressed, with a little something called Dynamic Punch Control that allows for both auto and manual combinations featuring a variety of high and low punches. So, although you're unlikely to mix too much variation into your style in the heat of battle, at least there's some kind of option for strategic refinement.

As expected with an EA Sports title, game mode variety is high, but some options are more ➡

"No, no, not the face, anything but the face!"

THE NOBLE ART OF CHEATING

Lagging behind? Ditch those Queensbury rules in favour of the no-slaps-barred lore of the playground.

LOW BLOW
L1+R2+✕
Trapped in a corner? Buy some time with a crunch in the crotch.

HEAD-BUTT
L1+R2+△
If the other guy's a clincher, teach him the concept of physical taboo via the skull-on-septum method.

KIDNEY PUNCH
L1+R2+○
Introduce your opponent to searing, potentially life-threatening lower-back agony.

ELBOW
L1+R2+▢
The footballer's favourite. It's the hardest bone in the body. And it always looks accidental.

CLINCH
L1+R1
Need a breather from a persistent jabber? Give him (or her) a hug.

PUSH-AWAY
L1+R2+→
Your opponent is up close and working on that widening cut. Push has definitely come to the shove.

Shaping up before the fight with a couple of mincing masseurs is hardly very manly is it?

Quartey, a ringer for Sisqo. Altogether now: 'Thong, Thong, thong, thong...'

Train to win. Or cheat and go for a slugfest.

Q&A

DAVID DEMARTINI

A quiet word with *Knockout Kings 2001* Producer, David DeMartini...

distinct than others. Exhibition is a standard quick-start: a one-off, one- or two-player bout between two same-weight fighters. Slugfest is more improvised, immediate and much more fun. Square up any two boxers from any weight class and replace the regulation punch-stamina with another power bar which, once it maxes out, opens up a 'super punch' that almost always floors the opponent. It's a nice idea, which, like most of the game, needs more tuning. It takes far too long to squeeze the power-bar to the top and, since it resets every round becomes very annoying.

PROGRESSIVE TRAINING

Fantasy Fights is little more than a pre-set Exhibition mode imagining various admittedly juicy match-ups that in real life were inconceivable – Ali vs Marciano, Robinson vs Leonard, Frazier vs Dempsey. Sadly, due to ludicrous licensing realities, there's no opportunity to pit Hamed or Tyson against other greats as they will be releasing their own licenced boxing games in the near future. However in Exhibition and Slugfest modes it's possible to fight with female boxers such as Mia St John and Regina Halmich which might extend the appeal to the lady-boxing fetishists among us.

Although one- and, particularly, two-player bouts in all of these modes are perfectly respectable, the real meat of the game is the Career option, in which you create your own boxer, choose a gym/trainer and a 'cuts' specialist (your

ringside medic) then try to train and fight your way up through the ranks with an aim at an eventual title-shot. This manages to be both great fun and incredibly frustrating, because it's the most illuminating glimpse at how good the game might have been with more care and attention. First up, you select a 'look' for your fighter – from a miserly handful of options based on four or five different races with slightly altered hairstyles. What the game really needs though, is the chance to really 'create' a character using a more subtle mugshot generator. A boxer who actually looks vaguely like you will surely increase the empathy, make the gameplay a little more personal. The player customisation in EA's *FIFA* doesn't fare too badly so why not in this? Equally, there's a paltry choice of five different colours/designs of shorts, gloves and boots. It would be nice to unlock more options, as in *SSX*, as your boxer gets more recognition. Most maddening is that the game lets you choose an entrance style and even a signature tune, but gives you only limited options for the boxer's looks.

Career mode alternates between your newly 'created' boxer slugging it out with the next bum in

//Why can't Lennox Lewis be designed to sharpen up against a one-trick brawler?//

Is it difficult walking the fine line between realistic boxing action and immediate gameplay?
We spent a lot of time working on keeping all the essence of realism while keeping focused on the fun that should be in a videogame. In Slugfest mode, we exaggerate everything so you get much more of an over-the-top experience. Slugfest is the party mode.

How does the new full body-scan benefit the 2001 edition?
The fighters look exactly as they do in real life. The full body-scan is the technology that allows us to capture the exact look and musculature of each individual fighter so that we can create fantastic-looking boxers. You have never

seen characters in a videogame look so real. From a distance, it's difficult to tell if it's a game or a real fight.

Does the full range of stats – including reach and skill attributes – allow for strategic play such as using jabs if your range allows, to avoid body shots?
There are many ways to enjoy the game. You can just get in there with friends and mash buttons and have a great time with the speed, gameplay and great animation. But, to really conquer it, you need to be very smart about the way in which you use and develop your boxing skills. You can play the game either way, but if you really want to be the greatest, you have to learn the nuances.

CREATE BOXER Style

PLAYER

Boxer Look	Look 1
Tattoos	Eagle
Stance	Right-Handed
Boxing Style	Freestyle
Gloves	Blue Ocean
Trunks	Blue Ocean
Shoes	Red Diamonds
Taunt	Wave Hand in Air
Ring Walk	Energized
Music	Fabulous Ones 2 - Blackaliscious

△ BACK   □ RANDOMIZE   NEST ⊗

Bless him. He's so stupid you've even got to dress him before a fight.

Keep it clean, no biting, clawing or pulling of hair.

The only result you want to see after a fight is your opponent eating the mat.

Now that has got to hurt. A lot.

line for a title shot, before hitting the gym to build up stats. After the training session, depending on the type of gym selected earlier, your boxer will increase in power, speed, stamina, heart (how many times he can get up and come back for more) or cuts (how quickly those potentially fight-stopping slashes heal). Although the training sessions wisely concentrate on punches, combinations and general fight technique, there are only around five progressions before the whole cycle repeats itself. This means that, once you've finished the highest training level, the next time you return, it's back to the basic punches – which, by then, should have been mastered long ago.

EARLY RISER

It's also far too easy to cultivate the kind of boxer who can sail up the rankings on brute force alone. At the beginning of Career mode, simply pile those introductory stats onto power and speed, a little on stamina, and just wade in to the first ten to 15 fighters punching wildly. Back off a little if he gets a few lucky shots in, and then steam back in there with the bruisers. The overbalance is painful. Using this method, we managed to rise up to the top three with around an 80% first-round knockout ratio. How hard can it be to have a boxer, particularly one who's supposed to be a representation of a world champ/all-time great, recognise that you're just repeatedly performing the same series of moves and nailing them all too easily? If SSX can spot trick repetition and dock points accordingly, why can't Lennox Lewis be designed to sharpen up against a one-trick brawler? Surely he hasn't taken that many blows to the head?

Elsewhere, the niggles are piled high. In training, if your choice of gym increases your boxer's 'heart' and 'stamina' by one after each session, there's no option to progress to another

type of gym once those stats are maxed out. Loading times are a big pain too. Everything your boxer does, from entering the ring to 'adjusting' himself in a manly fashion is punctuated by minutes of disc spinning. The commentary, by Harry Carpenter and Barry McGuigan, isn't bad in itself, but it rarely relates to what's actually happening. A furious fight featuring four knock-downs apiece was described by McGuigan as, "The worst I've ever seen." There's also far too much constant babble. The designers clearly felt that Harry and Barry ought to say something – anything – after every single punch exchange. As a result, the repetition factor is laughable. A genuine example? Harry saying, "Just look at these two! Just look at these two going at it! Just look at these two – toe to toe. Just look at these two!") We doubt that Harry's reputation as the voice of boxing was built on this kind of insight.

There's an old game review cliché which goes, "If you like boxing games, then you'll like this. If you don't, you won't." Sadly, if you do 'like' boxing games then you probably will 'like' this, but you'll get less frustration and more out-and-out entertainment from ten rounds in the ring with *Ready 2 Rumble: Round 2*. □ **Andy Lowe**

KNOCKOUT KINGS 2001

Why we'd buy it:	Why we'd leave it:	Despite the hype, not much of a progression from *Knockout Kings 2000*. Plenty of decent ideas bogged down by half-baked execution and sloppy design.
- It's the only sim-style boxing game on PS2 - Good 'official' feel with recognisable characters - The two-player mode	- Tempting to ignore technique - Sluggish response, PSone loading times - Poor design-your-own boxer mode	

Graphics	Good-looking, fluid-moving character models	08
Sound	Crunching punches, awful commentary	07
Gameplay	Limited and desperately needs more polish	06
Life span	Easy and the 'real boxer' novelty soon palls	05

06

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

Q&A

LENNOX LEWIS

We had a chat with the Brit star of the show. He seems to like the game. We felt no urge to argue.

So what do you think of the PlayStation 2 version of Lennox Lewis?
This game is so real, my virtual self looks and boxes exactly as I do. My moves are in the game! And, more importantly, so is my hairstyle. I've also got a secret punch, but I'm not telling you how to do it. Plus, it gives me the only opportunity to fight some of the greatest fighters of all time, including Muhammad Ali.

Are you worried the game might be too realistic and your future opponents will be able to analyse your fighting style?
Not really. It just means that all those people who desperately want to box like me can actually do it now. And

a lot of people who want to try and beat me can actually do it now. Well, they can try – just like real life.

There'll probably be another version of *Knockout Kings* next year. What would you like to add to the game if you could?
Probably tea-time. Half-way through the fight, you can stop and have tea with the other guy. Ask him how many lumps he wants…

Are you disappointed that Mike Tyson isn't in the game?
I heard Mike Tyson's coming out with a game of his own, but it doesn't compare to this one. In fact, Tyson should play the game, because it's the only chance he has of beating me.

Konoko: firearms, attitude and perfect manicure come as standard.

ONI

Can *Oni*'s tooled-up Konoko steal Lara Croft's thunder with her anime charms?

Back story
Oni is an action/adventure with the emphasis firmly on the action that saw its origins in the development team's love of the anime classic *Ghost in the Shell*, and Luc Besson's female assassin flick, *La Femme Nikita*.

When it's not being preoccupied with borderline disquieting, saucer-eyed adolescents or hellish demons and their grotesquely mutating bodies, Japanese anime (the motion picture incarnation of manga) does a very neat line in dystopian future worlds populated by androids, troubled world orders and faceless mega-corporations intent on crushing the rights of the individual. And if you think that sounds like frivolous sci-fi gubbins you'd be wrong. Anime features such as *Akira* and *Ghost in the Shell* have justly carved themselves an accomplished and thought provoking niche in the world of animation that makes Disney seem, well, a bit Mickey Mouse.

Oni is an impressive, third-person action adventure that doesn't so much imitate anime futureshock as it does break into its shiny living quarters and steal its credentials. Not too shabby for a Japanese-inspired game that was developed in that land of the rising wind, Chicago.

The scene has now been set and usually there would now follow a brief sketch of the game's story line. And this review won't be any different except for one thing. It's a gaming cliché that most titles can't offer anything more than a bolted on justification for the ensuing gameplay. Not so with *Oni*. This game has a plot. A bloody good one at that. It's a rich story that draws the main character

(and therefore you the player) onwards to a genuinely unexpected conclusion via the kind of misdirection and well paced revelations that most Tinseltown blockbusters would kill for. To reveal all the details here would be unfair but here's a brief outline for you...

It's 2032 and the world is run by the WCG (World Coalition Government) a deceptively benevolent name for the greedy organisation that keeps the First World prosperous and safe in climate-controlled urban bubbles. Meanwhile, the Third World goes to ruin in – and here's another euphemism for you – Wilderness Preserves that make up the remainder of the planet's poisoned surface outside the range of the 'Atmospheric Conversion Centres'. Inside these safe zones the WCG keeps its citizens in the dark about the extent of the ecological breakdown, and itself in power by monopolising the spread of new technology with its TCTF (Technology Crimes Task Force). All well and good for the powers that be, but a shadowy and well equipped criminal organisation known as the Syndicate is proving to be a real thorn in the WCG's side by trafficking arms, drugs and Jack Straw knows what else.

THE FUTURE'S PURPLE

You play Konoko, a purple-haired, one woman SWAT team about to embark on her first field

mission. Orphaned at the age of three Konoko has been raised and trained as a TCTF operative by its leader, Griffin and a 'family' of scientists. From when she was young her special abilities were obvious. As Konoko's missions take her further into Syndicate territory she discovers that not only is the criminal underworld planning something horrific, but her very identity and origins are linked to the investigation in hand.

After such a thorough build up, the nature of *Oni*'s gameplay may seem a tad simplistic – it certainly is straightforward. As Konoko you must progress through increasingly hostile environments employing stealth (occasionally) and a mixture of weapons and martial arts skills (the large majority of the time) to neutralise the Syndicate goons (amongst others) and complete missions, each of which sets up the next. There are however, traps to negotiate, electronic locks to be disengaged and deadly brains to be shut down (don't ask) but otherwise and for the most part it's all about you kicking Syndicate ass martial arts-style and uncovering what the hell is going on. In short think of *Oni* as the ACTION adventure Yin to *Tomb Raider*'s action ADVENTURE Yang.

As with all simple ideas the way *Oni* executes its combination of hand-to-hand and weapons-based combat is of paramount importance. And

Lights, camera, traction. Konoko trips the light fantastic with a Deadly Brain.

Mercifully the street scooter hasn't made it into 2032.

Thanks to some impressive combos, Konoko can easily take on multiple goon.

for the most part, developer Bungie Software has got it right. Konoko's movement is handled by a combination of the analogue sticks. Left for movement, right for orientation and elevation of view. The Dual Shock 2's four function button cluster is set aside for performing non-combat actions such as using medikits (renamed Hypos here) and accessing computer terminals, whilst ☐1 and ☐2 take care of jumping and crouching respectively. So what about the full on martial arts action then? Well, buttons ☐1 and ☐2 take care of all of that. Oh, and they're also the ones to use for firing weapons. It may sound ambitious but it actually works like a dream.

KICKING WITH CONFIDENCE

The key to the combat system's variety is how you combine button presses. Press ☐1 and you'll throw a standard punch. Run at an enemy *and* press punch however, and if you're close enough you'll perform a Running Larait that sees Konoko using her opponent's neck as a May pole. How about a Crescent Moon kick? Just press kick twice, tap forward and press kick again. Throws, feints and sliding tackles – they're all here. When you consider the number of possible combinations that these two shoulder buttons and the left analogue stick alone can trigger, you will begin to appreciate how rich and intuitive an experience fighting *Oni* can be. And when your fists or feet do connect with their intended target they send up a colour-coded flash to show how close they are to giving up the ghost for good. Green and you've picked a fight with a healthy specimen, worse luck. Red and they're about to hit the deck. It's a good idea that comes into its own when you're taking on multiple enemies, enabling you to target the weaker ones first. Failing that, you can always take them all out with a Running Lariat.

//It's all about you kicking arse martial arts style and uncovering what the hell is going on//

The same fluidity is found in Konoko's regular movement. Say you want to perform a mid-air flip. All you need to do is think how you would go about performing one if you had to get off your comfy sofa and fight an adversary for real. So you make Konoko run forward, jump and tuck into herself by pressing crouch. Simple. Indeed, one of the most rewarding parts of the game is discovering just what your heroine can do. But there's more. As Konoko progresses through the investigation she 'learns' new moves and combat techniques, becoming increasingly effective as she goes. A neat idea that adds a touch of realism to the game as well as an added incentive to keep on going when the challenges stack up. ➡

Storming out into the open doesn't always have the desired effect.

Some of the animation really needs pausing to do it justice.

Enemy AI is impressive with adversaries doing their best to track you down and shut you up.

Take one Hypo too many and Konoko gets a surge of power.

→ *Oni*'s weapons too, are varied and innovative, spawning a couple of new additions to the not-a-good-way-to-go hall of fame. A particularly nasty nominee is the Mercury Bow which fires frozen slivers of the highly toxic metal into your opponent. However, stockpiling of hardware is prohibited. Unlike Lara's Tardis-like backpack, Konoko can only carry one weapon at a time, so you're constantly forced to think about the long-term usefulness of that Van de Graaf Pistol. Of course, when you start the game you'll only be equipped with a regular pistol. So yet again, progress has its rewards.

And thanks to a well thought out in-game information system it's easy to chart exactly where your progress has taken you. The Data Comlink contains info on acquired weapons, newly learnt attack moves, mission objectives, items and even a diary that charts Konoko's growing awareness of what her investigation is uncovering. It's such a good idea, fusing the player's and Konoko's learning curves with this interface. It also helps to cushion the action with the unravelling mystery.

True to its anime inspirations, *Oni*'s graphics mix impressively imagined future environments with that stylised yet taut eccentricity that has been a staple of Japanese anime characters since before *Battle of the Planets*. Character animation

//Fusing player and character learning curves cushions the action with mystery//

is good throughout. It's at its most showy during fights, but is best in the details. Civilians caught in crossfire will cower away from you at first, but when they regain their composure they'll stop and watch you as you go past. It's a refreshing change from the oblivious automations that usually make up the cast of extras. However it's the level design is the real eye-opener. Created by architects using professional CAD software the buildings and structures in *Oni* have an unusually realistic scale and are rarely less than beautiful. And that even includes the multistorey car park. If anything, the dimensions of levels are almost too true to life on occasion, with Konoko being forced to run over considerable distances to reach her next destination.

THE PLOT THICKENS
The cut-scenes that tend to bookend individual missions are announced stylishly with the game screen narrowing to a cinematic letterbox view

Hoofing an opponent into a laser trip wire trap is just one way to get the upper hand.

1. Griffin, TCTF chief is living with a bad case of anime hair.

2. His protegé, Konoko isn't exactly enthused with her own barnet.

3. Nevertheless, she wastes no time and springs into action...
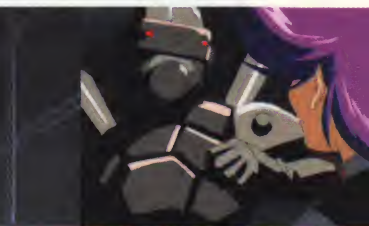
4. ...confronting a Nicky Clarke stormtrooper...

Oni does a fine job of recreating such natural effects as mist and fire.

DAYDREAM BELIEVER

The bizarre world of Konoko's inner psyche.

After the normality of hunting down the psychotic boss of an international crime syndicate across a future world, events take an unusual turn in mission 11, when it all gets a little too much for our heroine and she dozes off. There follows a bizarre stage set in a wonky dream world complete with mist, floating sidekicks and miniature baddies who can only be defeated by crouching down. No idea…

The inset manga portraits of talking characters is a suitably stylish touch.

Exposition scenes reveal but keep you guessing throughout.

and with talking characters accompanied by inset portraits. Wisely, these exposition scenes are rendered with the regular game engine. It adds to overall continuity and doesn't have you wishing the playable graphics were up to the FMV.

Similarly, the sound works well to enhance the game atmosphere. Generators hum convincingly, footfall is realistic while masked adversaries actually sound like they have something over their mouths. And as for the made-up weapons? When a developer makes it hard to imagine a Scram Cannon sounding any different, somebody is obviously doing their job right. Top marks are also due for the game's score. A surprisingly effective mix of scattershot techno beats and ambient mood surges that act as atmosphere amplifiers to the in-game action without drawing attention away from it.

And the downside? Despite a range of fighting movement that puts most action hero(ine)s to shame, Konoko is unable to perform some of the gymnastics that the Crofts and Snakes of this world have led us to expect. This may not seem that significant but without the ability to cling to ledges, ride vehicles and swing from ropes Konoko never really gets to abuse loop-holes and short cuts in her environment. It's a trade off obviously and the fact that your heroine can throw a Syndicate ninja off a roof and slide under laser trip wires shouldn't be ignored. It's just that shorn

of these extra avenues of movement, the secrets in Oni tend to come via the plot rather than exploration.

And then there's the camera movement. Whereas it's easy in most situations to be able to change Konoko's view/aim with the right analogue stick, when it comes to close quarters combat it can be a bit frustrating, having to reorientate Konoko constantly in mid-fight when, for example, a successful throw suddenly leaves you staring at an empty room with the bad guys behind and bearing down on you. It's a system that can be learnt, but for the sake of speed and immediacy it would have been great if hand-to-hand combat could have triggered a temporary, 'see all', fixed camera position.

These points aside, Oni is an exciting and stylishly executed game that rescues the phrase 'it's like playing a movie' from the no man's land of feint praise. A rare case of action with brains. It really is a blast dispatching worryingly intelligent Syndicate patrols with ruthless efficiency. And when the story grabs you in earnest, don't be surprised if you start caring about Konoko in a way that makes her continued survival a sight more meaningful than just avoiding a 'game over' screen. Now that's something even Lara Croft never managed. ☐ **Paul Fitzpatrick**

As you progress, Konoko learns new fight moves. Sweet.
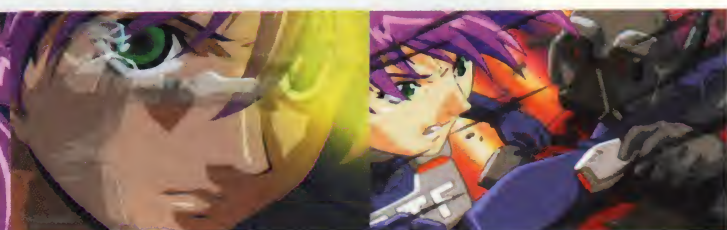
5. …who lets rip with a deadly hail of spritzer…

6. But not before Konoko extracts a full refund.

ONI

Why we'd buy it:	Why we'd leave it:	Very nearly a great game, but Oni's great style and intelligent plot are undercut with a lack of sustained gameplay variety. Satisfyingly ambitious nevertheless.
- Style and intelligence in spades - Great level design - An action heroine who literally kicks ass	- Lack of true variety in gameplay - No multiplayer option - Elements of control system can be a challenge	

Graphics	Pitch perfect anime with great animation	07
Sound	Superior blend of SFX and inventive score	08
Gameplay	More challenging puzzles would've been good	07
Life span	Big game but little incentive to play again	07

07

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

And we'll just add a pinch of pepper, some mixed spice, a hint of cyanide...

And you thought time travel involved a Delorian, Michael J Fox and some whizzy lightning. Nope, it's all green balls...

There are many ways in which you meet your death but none quite so grisly as falling a hundred feet to the street below.

Would you accept a Sunday lunch from this man?

04/08/2001
03/20/1902

SHADOW OF MEMORIES
In the PS2's most filmic offering to date, death is just the beginning...

Publisher: Konami
Developer: KCET
Price: £39.99
Players: 1
Out: Now
Web site: www.shadowofmem ories.com

Back story
After the successful release of *Silent Hill* and before *Silent Hill 2* came into being Junko Kawano, director of *SOM*, had an idea. She wanted to move the genre of horror away from the confines of blood and guts. What she ended up with is *Shadow Of Memories*, an exercise in pure, white terror.

It began so quietly. Despite its emergence from the same stable as *Silent Hill*, the game was nothing to gaze in awe over, nothing to even recommend to a friend. However first impressions, as we have learned, can be disastrously inaccurate. Welcome to *Shadow Of Memories*.

From the very opening of KCET's first PS2 offering, a snowball is set in motion that gathers a momentum which doesn't let up until the game's shattering and (most importantly) unexpected conclusion. You quite simply won't realise just what a classic nugget of software you have in front of you until an ending which makes things so devastatingly clear.

To explain the plot would be unfair, spoiling perhaps the best scripted game yet conceived so we'll give you just the bare bones. A young man named Eike Kusch is murdered, outside a cafe. Rather than kicking up his heels, he is transported to a mysterious void (floating timepieces, blackness, doors to nowhere, you know the drill). Here he is offered a choice by a lone voice in the darkness. Either remain dead or go back. No catches, no selling his soul, just go back and stay alive. If he can.

And so he does. Handed a mysterious device that allows him to cut through the ribbons of time Eike returns to the mortal realm to begin his quest to find out who is trying to murder him – and more importantly, why. Starting off just two hours before he was originally killed, Eike must try to avoid being seen and dying, but die he/you inevitably will. Each of these deaths will send Eike backwards and forwards in time as he attempts to discover who offed him in the first palce.

As the plot becomes more convoluted, the eight chapters over which the game is set increasingly require more forethought than you would have thought possible in your average gamesplayer. It is the ultimate whodunnit. Or rather 'whoisgonnadoit'.

DEATH BECOMES HIM
Shadow Of Memories takes place in a nameless European city whose inhabitants go about their everyday business, despite your presence. On the surface you could be fooled into thinking European life is somewhat tedious. Indeed, little else makes up the town apart from roads, buildings and a market square. Yet there is something woven through *SOM*'s world that unnerves you. Perhaps it's the eerie score, or the way people look strangely at you – or more likely, it's the use of the camera. From leafy tree canopies it peers at you, watching your every move. The camera spies on you spying on the town and it's, well, unnerving to say the least.

No idea who the masked juggler is but fella at the bottom could be a walrus. Maybe.

Eike. Damned to suffered endless deaths for an eternity, Or can he solve the riddle?

Mr Wagner the mysterious alchemist could hold a clue to your deaths.

04/08/2001 05:04:13 PM

While *Shadow Of Memories* has *Silent Hill* at it's core, the story and gameplay couldn't be more radically different. The game does borrow *Silent Hill*'s map system, in which parts of the city open up to you as you progress while character animation and camera angles are virtually identical. But where *Silent Hill* transported the player between 'normal' and 'alternative' personas of it's town, *SOM* takes a time travelling route.

Action is kept to the same European city as you shift between the 16th Century, the 19th Century, 1979/80 and the present day. As you gambol between time periods searching for the answers to your repeated deaths, you are required to alter destiny and, as sci-fi fans will know, the more you tamper with the past the greater the knock-on affect. Indeed, you'll eventually reach a point near the game's climax where you're desperately clinging to reality. Example? Having to go back in time to prevent the planting of a tree in which your killer hides when it is fully grown n the future is just one incident that springs to mind...

To prevent total confusion the narrative of *SOM* is played out at considerable length in explanatory FMV sequences – if in slightly too numerous a quantity. Despite *SOM*'s convoluted plot, a surprising amount of your destiny is already predetermined for you. During the early ➡

THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS
It isn't often that your murderer could be one of many people spanning nearly five centuries but we take a look at the possible suspects.

DANA
A waitress who befriends Eike after he leaves his lighter in her coffee shop. Accidentally transported to another time by Eike's time machine she could be seeking her revenge.

ECKHART
Proprietor of the Town Museum, could Eckhart harbour a grudge against Eike for a dark secret? Could this gentle cat lover really be responsible?

EIKE
Eike? Could our hero be tracking himself through time desperately trying to break the cycle of constantly being killed? Does he want to end this once and for all?

FORTUNE
Who is the masked stranger who knows so much about Eike. Why won't she reveal herself or tell Eike how to avoid the dangers? Does she want him dead?

WAGNER
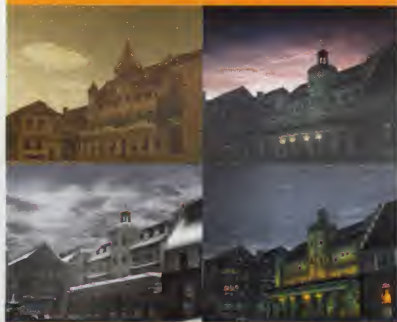A soon-to-be 16th Century single father bringing up two kids. Eike enters their lives and shortly afterwards Wagner's wife dies. Does he blame Eike?

Are you confronting the killer or just taking part in useful chit-chat? Only time will tell. Or will it? Ah, sweet paradox!

One minute you're admiring the view, the next you're decorating the pavement with your innards.

The developers have employed subtle techniques to keep continuity in the surroundings as well as evolve them. Take a look at the town hall for the perfect example of how everything changes but essentially remains exactly the same.

As things gradually begin to fall into place you'll learn that nothing is as it seems. And just who is the mysterious figure in black?

Get used to it, this is a sight you'll be seeing a lot. But there's never any blood. Bah!

stages of the game, for example, a young boy begs you to help his grandfather trapped in a burning house. No matter how long you procrastinate or refuse, ultimately you can only make progression by getting your ass burned off. This is a game where you *have* to die to progress. However the plot isn't without its branches and when decisions are made by Eike, they can be both profound and far-reaching.

Just about every puzzle, mystery or conversation you engage in may appear trivial, often proving fruitless or just serving to waste your valuable time. Most of the time, you'd be correct, asy some of the puzzles you're required to solve are too simple to prove satisfying. However it's the the repercussions of these cracked puzzles and mysteries that make it all worth while.

TRICKY TWISTER

Aesthetically *Shadow Of Memories* uses the PS2 capabilities to the best of it's ability. There is some slight evidence of pop-up (quashed in part by the closeness of buildings and lack of horizon) but the lip-syncing and animation are suitably convincing. The use of colours is also an indicator to which time period you're actually inhabiting, as is the on-screen clock. Both stop the possible paradoxical pandemonium you'll find yourself when shifting from one identical area to the next. Present day is drenched in colour while earlier years take on black and white or sepia tones to indicate the different period.

Ultimately though, despite the visual appeal and token puzzles, *SOM's* true strength lays in it's plot. The way in which the story tumbles, careers from left to right then folds back on itself is a

masterstroke. We estimate it will take you little over four hours gameplay to complete, after which you will be graded as to how much of the plot you uncovered and be rewarded with a suitable ending. However given that the game has six endings and you'll need to pay attention to the most frivalous of details to attain a perfect score, be prepared to play this over and over again.

Granted, it all becomes taxing. You won't see what significance anything you do has, which makes patience a must. There are no quick fix shocks like it's predecessor *Silent Hill* and thrill seekers will be thoroughly disappointed. For those with enough conviction to see through their actions there is a twist at the end which punches you straight between the eyes. It's guaranteed to leave you utterly aghast at the cunning and tragedy behind the apparently meandering plot.

Shadow Of Memories is a slow burner, it is likely to pull in many action fans with it's apparently unengaging plot and visuals, but have the courage to see it through to the end and you'll be left breathless by the revelations it springs on you. If you thought *Silent Hill* was terrifying, just wait for *Shadow Of Memories*. Its inventiveness, sheer cunning and utterly original slant on pure cold terror will leave you slack jawed. ☐ **Ben Lawrence**

//It is the ultimate whodunnit. Or rather 'whoisgonnadoit?'//
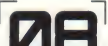
TIME TRAVEL EXPLAINED. SORT OF.

Confused by time travel? Then join the boffins who have been trying to unravel the paradox for years.

Warning: this paradox will screw up your brain. If you were to go back in time to kill your grandmother this will prevent the birth of your mother, thus preventing your birth. And of course, if you were never born, that means you couldn't have travelled back to kill your grandmother. This, as you may have worked out, means she is then able to give birth to your mother who in turn gives birth to you, which enables you to go back... My head hurts.

SHADOW OF MEMORIES

Why we'd buy it:	Why we'd leave it:	Don't underestimate this.
- Tremendous story line	- A tad dull with just one	*SOM* will shock you to the
- Plot that twists more	location	core, and is profoundly
than Chubby Checker.	- Puzzles can be too easy	entertaining once you
On a helter skelter. in		know what you're
some Levi's		looking for.

Graphics	Not important. Deliver what is required	07
Sound	Spooky, unnerving and darn right brilliant	08
Gameplay	Great, but you won't know that until the end	08
Life span	Long. If at first you don't succeed...	09

08

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

ESPN NHN's default camera is an awkward side-on affair – best switch to the classic top/down view.

Not-so-jolly hockey sticks: Konami's sim has temperamental controls.

TV-style replays allow you to see your goals from every angle.

The goalie makes yet another spectacular save.

WHAT AN ATMOSPHERE!

Despite the gameplay foibles, ESPN National Hockey Night has a superb atmosphere with crowd noise that ebbs and flows as the game progresses, plus pre-match cut-scenes and extravagant goal celebrations.

The tension builds as the teams skate out onto the ice...

...while an organ plays a stirring rendition of Star Spangled Banner.
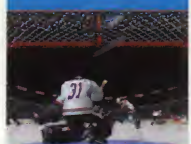
A face-off, then suddenly a player breaks free and scores!

Cue modest celebration.

ESPN NATIONAL HOCKEY NIGHT

Can Konami challenge ice queen EA with its cool hockey sim?

Publisher: Konami
Developer: KCEO
Price: £39.99
Players: 1-4
Out: April
Web site: www.konami-europe.com

Back story

ESPN National Hockey Night is the latest in Konami's branded line of US sports titles that includes *ESPN NBA 2Night* (reviewed page118) and *ESPN International Track & Field* – both on PS2. – with more to follow. Konami's last ice hockey outing on PSone was *NHL Blades of Steel 2000*, but it was frozen by superior titles from EA Sports, SCEE and Activision.

If you've ever witnessed an actual live ice hockey game, you'll understand what an inexplicably dull spectator sport it is. Only the regular on-rink brawls make it worth the ticket price. Although the sport possesses all the elements of an engrossing spectacle with fast-moving sportsmen and the over-the-top Americana we know and indulge, ice hockey somehow fails to deliver unadulterated excitement. Inexplicably though, videogame versions of the sport are a much more enjoyable and involving experience, allowing you to take on friends and even spill their blood on the ice.

Konami's *ESPN National Hockey Night* is in direct competition with EA Sportys' mighty *NHL 2001* and although it doesn't have the panache and playability of the EA Sports behemoth, it's still worth investigating. All of the official teams are present and correct, as well as two special bonus line-ups comprising of the cream of NHL puck-men. You have the option of playing a full season, a play-off or exhibition match, plus the opportunity to design your own players for that essential short, fat Neville Southall-style goalkeeper.

Graphics are impressive, with over 800 motion captures ensuring smooth animation and realistic facial expressions, while the lighting effects, reflective ice and large 'whooping' crowd add to the big game atmosphere. *National Hockey Night* has a good choice of in-game camera angles, which is fortunate as the default side-on setting is difficult to get to grips with. Once that has been amended, and you've finished tinkering with the bewildering amount of strategies and tactics (erm, 'slot penetration'?) you're free to finally grab your stick and get hacking.

After a few minutes, you soon pick up the rudiments of passing, tackling and shooting, although control of the players is tricky and doesn't allow the finesse that the EA title delivers. Scoring is, frankly, a pain in the ice – it's made incredibly difficult due to the lack of power bar for shooting and the less-than-perfect camera views that can make goal-mouth action a hit 'n' hope affair. This means goals are usually scored by a player of your team following up a previously rebounded shot, which can make for a very frustrating game – especially as the AI isn't too special. Also, rather disappointingly, fights between players are presented with a cut-scene rather than a mini-game allowing you to knock seven shades out of the opposition.

ESPN National Hockey Night is an enjoyable enough sports game with competent graphics, all the stats you can eat and a pleasurable pick-up-and-play aesthetic. Unfortunately a few annoying traits mean that its skating on thin ice when compared with *NHL 2001*. ☐ **Jamie Sefton**

ESPN NATIONAL HOCKEY NIGHT

Why we'd buy it:	Why we'd leave it:	
- Great atmosphere with all the NHL teams - Playable with great replays	- Difficult to score goals - Tricky player controls and awkward views - EA's *NHL 2001* is better	A decent puck about, but just too many frustrating gameplay quirks. Better alternatives are already available.

Graphics	Competent animation, cut-scenes and replays	07
Sound	Great commentary and atmospheric crowd FX	08
Gameplay	Enjoyable, but annoying in places	06
Life span	You'll tire of this unless you're a hockey freak	05

06

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

Charge your energy up and foes are as good as dead.

Hack
Pressing ◎ unleashes a straight slashing move.

Skull Cleave
Push forward and hack to split the difference.

7 BLADES

Konami's unusual mix of Japanese history and sci-fi elements cuts up rough.

Publisher: Konami
Developer: KCEJ
Price: £39.99
Players: 1
Out: April
Web site: www.konami-europe.com

Back story
Based on Kaizo Hayashi's epic martial arts flick, *Legend of Zipang*, the game pits two young warriors against a force from the future, with Konami's Japanese team working with the director to condense the film's action sequences into this 3D action title's ongoing battles.

7 Blades tells the story of two Japanese warriors – the sword-wielding Gokurakumaru and his feisty pistol-packing female counterpart, Oyuri – as they do battle against enemies from the future within a series of feudal settings. A nonsensical introduction heralds the arrival of a time travelling fleet that has settled over a Japanese village ready to conquer the world. This duly sets up 7 Blades' cut-and-thrust content as these temporal troublemakers come at our brave duo wielding a fusion of old skool swords, point sticks and futuristic laser whips.

So old meets new as the heroic pair clash with dozens of enemy troops within the 3D worlds, resulting in beautifully choreographed (but confusing) fight sequences where several foes are dispatched with one mighty sword thrust or a couple of head shots, while dozens more wait in the wings. However, just as action films require the odd moment of tranquility and plot development to maintain interest, 7 Blades falls on its sword with unrelenting battle scenes that are repeated ad infinitum. A modicum of interest is added via a variety of collectable weapons – including a comically long sword known as the Horse Slasher

//7 Blades falls on its sword with unrelenting battle scenes that are repeated ad infinitum//

and others with curvy blades – and sub-tasks that include a rescue mission. But let's face it, repeatedly piling through wave after wave of bad guys just doesn't hold the interest – whether it is with scimitar, six-shooter or oversized sword.

UNBALANCED FEMALE
On the positive side, 7 Blades' control system is well implemented and explained via a welcome tutorial mode. As with *Dynasty Warriors 2*, the assorted moves are built around thrusts, jumps, spins and swipes and ably supported by a visually impressive special attack that fells umpteen players with one energy-draining smash. Conversely, Oyuri is less satisfying to control, with her gun skills making it all too easy to kill the oncoming villains. This can give the game a very unbalanced feel. Provision has also been made for a lock-on system, with the ⋒ button targeting the

Unarmed combat
Press ⓐ to lay into anyone too close.

Super Attack
◎ and ⓐ sets off this little number.

Even slavering demons can be taken out with a swift shot from your trusty pistol.

"That ain't a knife, *this* is a knife..."

Trust us, being smacked about by this thing gives you far more than just a slight bruise.

Space ninjas from outer space. Surely a title in their own right...

As good as *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*? Um, not really.

The special effects just keep on getting more and more... special.

nearest assailant for the next shot or thrust. The first-person mode is ideal for using Oyuri's projectile weapons to pick off the archers and snipers that utilise inaccessible nooks and ledges as vantage points.

Another interesting addition is that the player's chosen warrior is accompanied by their CPU-controlled partner and a secondary mentor character. These warriors muck in during the fights but tend to let the side down far to often by walking into trees and generally milling around aimlessly. But this is symptomatic of a lot of *7 Blades*' failings, and while much of the game clamours for attention and is designed to impress it somehow fails to do so.

This is because the stale content is not the only internal demon that *7 Blades* finds itself fighting; the often clumsy graphics being a prime example. Although its levels are festooned with fast running rivers and a series of fragile buildings and constructions, *7 Blades* looks rather primitive at times. A general lack of detail and some blocky elements conspire to create a raw-looking game reminiscent of Activision's similarly-themed *Tenchu* games for PSone, while the game's aggravating twitchy cameras are also a throwback to days of yore. With the action sequences already stricken by their limited nature, to find matters further confused as the game's camera hides behind a tree or offers an attractive but needless close-up of either heroes' face, just makes matters worse and often makes aligning the next attack unnecessarily difficult.

LUWIE NOT LAVISH

Luckily, while key elements date the game terribly, other smaller features are simply inspired – showcasing ideas that momentarily lift the tired action. As Gokurakumaru slaughters six or seven men at a time, for example, the fallen bodies' arch to indicate their death throes, while the attack patterns of said bad guys also vary depending on whatever weapon they are holding. The game's tinkling flute soundtrack and dark-hued levels give

it an Art House feel in stark contrast to *DW2*'s decidedly lavish Hollywood take on Feudal Japan. But those who live by the sword, die by the sword and *7 Blades* loses out both in terms of its scale and presentation.

The Konami game runs along more linear and restrictive lines than *Dynasty Warriors 2* and also succumbs to the same killer gameplay blows that will ensure it will be racked alongside the Midas game in a box marked 'fun but shallow.' Its stylish against-the-odds combat sequences may indeed warrant a mention in the PS2 annals of playable fare, but the game finds itself constantly usurped by *DW2*'s larger body count, more expansive levels and ultimately grander vision.

The final, mortal wounds are then provided by the uneven content and gameplay imbalances. The sheer slog of powering through level after level of opponents against drab and clumsy backdrops fatally harms a game that initially offers so much potential for enjoyment.

The unintentionally funny cut-scenes (much inward reflection, and an inevitable promise to fight on) tell two slightly different stories depending on which character you play, providing some diversion from the battle scenes. Similarly the impressive cast of enemy ninjas, archers and slap-head generals nearly make it a worthwhile purchase, but unfortunately *7 Blades* – unlike its sword-swinging hero – just cannot hack it. □ **Steve Merrett**

7 BLADES

Why we'd buy it:	Why we'd leave it:	Initial enthusiasm for the gung ho killings wears off as the poorly drawn levels and single-track gameplay become apparent.
- Well balanced control system and instant bloodlust gratification - The versatility of the level design	- The unrelenting action lacks variety - Too many graphical rough edges - Those swirling cameras	

Graphics	Clumsy backdrops, but effective animation	06
Sound	Atmospheric period music	07
Gameplay	Pumped-up killing sprees. Repeat to fade	05
Life span	Shows its hand too early	05

06

PlayStation.2 VERDICT

It's total carnage when all the tanks face-of in the arena.

Hitting the ⊞ button gives you a handy bird's-eye view of the arena.

This is a situation you really don't want to be in, if you can help it.

WORLD DESTRUCTION LEAGUE:
THUNDER TANKS

A load of tooled-up tanks facing-off in a confined arena sounds like a recipe for disaster. It is – and you'll love it...

Publisher: 3DO
Developer: 3DO
Price: £39.99
Players: 1-4
Out: 23 March
Web site:
www.3DO.com

Back story
WDL:TT isn't an entirely new game, coming from an existing franchise that many may know as Battletanx originally released on N64. Although the first game didn't appear on PSone, the sequel Global Assault, did.

Now and again it's nice to be given a pleasant surprise. All too often we're confronted with the nasty ones such as a fresh turd under a pile of leaves or worse, opening up a newspaper to see Chris Evans drooling into Billie's hair. WDL: Thunder Tanks, however, is a surprise of the nicer variety.

Amongst a host of big-name sequels (Tekken Tag Tournament, MGS2) and new projects from established developers such as Square (The Bouncer) and KCEJ West (ZOE) WDL:TT could have so easily been left unsung and unnoticed. No-one really expected much of the game, but when it involves hurling nuclear weapons at heavily armoured tanks, how could it possibly fail?

Based entirely around combat, the background plot of WDL:TT is inconsequential. It is the thrill of heavy-duty fire power and exploding metal that defines the real spirit of this game. Although combat is from the comfort of your armoured vehicle, the single-player game is strangely reminiscent of TimeSplitters in that you are thrown into first-person death matches with a huge arsenal of weapons at your disposal. Battles take place in the game's many arenas against computer-controlled opponents, in two different modes of play.

The first, Tournament mode (the main single-player mode) puts you against the computer in a series of battles. Once a level is won you then progress to the next challenge. While Skirmish mode can be played against the computer or as multiplayer. This consists of Deathmatch, where it's kill or be killed; Domination, where you must gain control of the other tanks by capturing their bases; FPS standard, Capture the Flag; and Frenzy, a variation on the theme, that randomly places the flag in the arena and all must race to get it.

As good and well constructed the gameplay is, in single-player mode WDL:TT can get tedious pretty quickly. And the reason? it really only shines

//WDL: TT really only shines with four mates sitting in front of the television//

when you and three of your mates are sitting in front of the television. It seems the whole game has been designed to this end, it's a multiplayer game above anything else. Whilst it may lack the flexibility and customisation properties of TimeSplitters, Quake or Half-Life, this simple tank-based affair can at least offer something almost as enjoyable.

The arenas (of which there are many) are all well-designed, and given enough fire power, you can blow holes through walls and topple buildings onto your enemy with a satisfying efficiency. The weapons, that range from the genius of guided missiles to simple mines and grenades are entertaining, but balanced (see Weapons of War) with the mother of all arms being the Apocalypse-inducing, all-destroying Nuke.

TANK YOU VERY MUCH
The tanks on offer have their own individual attributes and they genuinely have viable alternatives over each other. Their strengths and weaknesses are such that there is no obvious one to plump for – each requires a different tactical sensibility (see Tanked Up). And they all come with unique weaponry too, from protective Nano Shields that can be placed on the arena floor to sniper cannons and speed-boosts.

Whilst WDL:TT is conceptually simple – but never simplistic – the level of invention and imagination layered onto it is quite amazing. In any one game there's always plenty going on, and you'll never tire of laying new traps and testing out all the weaponry options. Of course, such thought and care would be nothing without a decent game engine, and WDL:TT runs smooth and fast, making for a silken, if explosion-laden tank-destroying gaming experience.

Dotted around each arena are power-ups and helpful items like health. Thank God.
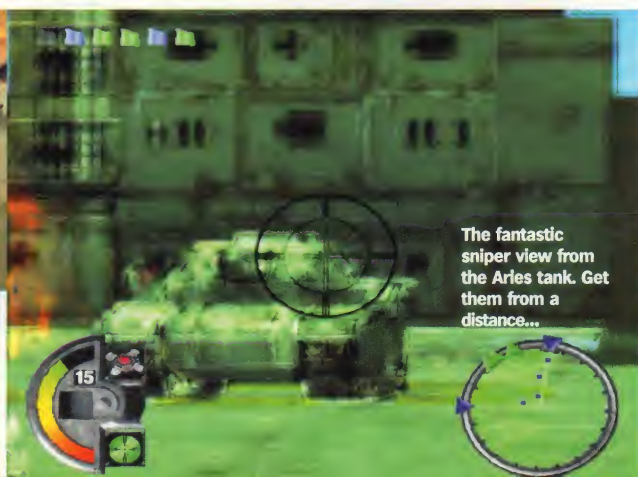
The fantastic sniper view from the Aries tank. Get them from a distance...

Grab a MultiTap, three friends and a spare evening, and *WDL:TT* really comes to life.

WEAPONS OF WAR

No shooter would be worth its salt if the weapons aren't up to scratch – *WDL:TT* doesn't disappoint...

Homing Missile
Your best friend in the heat of battle. Let these babies off and they'll home in on the nearest target. Great if your being taken from behind.

Artillery/Satellite Strike
These two weapons both have the same effect. Boost one up and the camera pulls back from the battle, letting you choose a target.

Guided Missile
Leave your tank behind and fly the friendly skies with this remote-controlled beast. A missile's-eye view helps you steer it.

Nuke
The Nuke weapon is devastating, the end result reminiscent of the nuclear holocaust sequence in *Terminator 2: Judgement Day*.

Grenades
Simple, but tremendous fun. Grenades are lobbed into the air from the front of your tank; let loose a volley and the ensuing carnage is spectacular.

Get a lock-on, and blast them to kingdom come.

Flip-E
This tank is unique in that it can 'strafe' to the side by flipping over on its roof. Unfortunately, for all its mobility, it only comes with a single, weak cannon.

Banshee
A novel one, this. The Banshee utilises huge speakers which use sonic energy (ie very loud music) to crush, kill and destroy. Secondary weaponry takes the form of a vast shockwave.

TANKED UP

Naturally, there are plenty of tanks to choose from in the game. As well as differing stats, all the tanks have different weapons.

Dragonfly
Small and fast, the Dragonfly packs a mean punch with a laserbolt-type affair. It uses a shield to safeguard itself.

Manticore
This armoured beast fires a pretty stream of electrical energy that bounces off walls and scenery till it finds its target. Secondary weaponry takes the form of a shield.

Scorcher
The Scorcher comes equipped with a mighty flame-thrower. It's secondary armament is even more impressive – a ring of fire expands outwards from the tank, engulfing all and sundry.

Although this game delivers enjoyment by the bucketful there are unfortunately a few faults. As a single-player game, there is no long-term interest. Blowing up CPU tanks just isn't as fun, or as devious, as eviscerating a human opponent, the control system, whilst intuitive and genuinely well thought-out, could have offered different set-ups for the analogue sticks, using one for movement and one for turret control.

The aural aspect isn't terribly well considered either. The continuous commentary is initially amusing, but the constant shouting soon makes you feel like you've got stuck in a lift with the *Robot Wars* commentator, whilst the music is under-used and somewhat muddy.
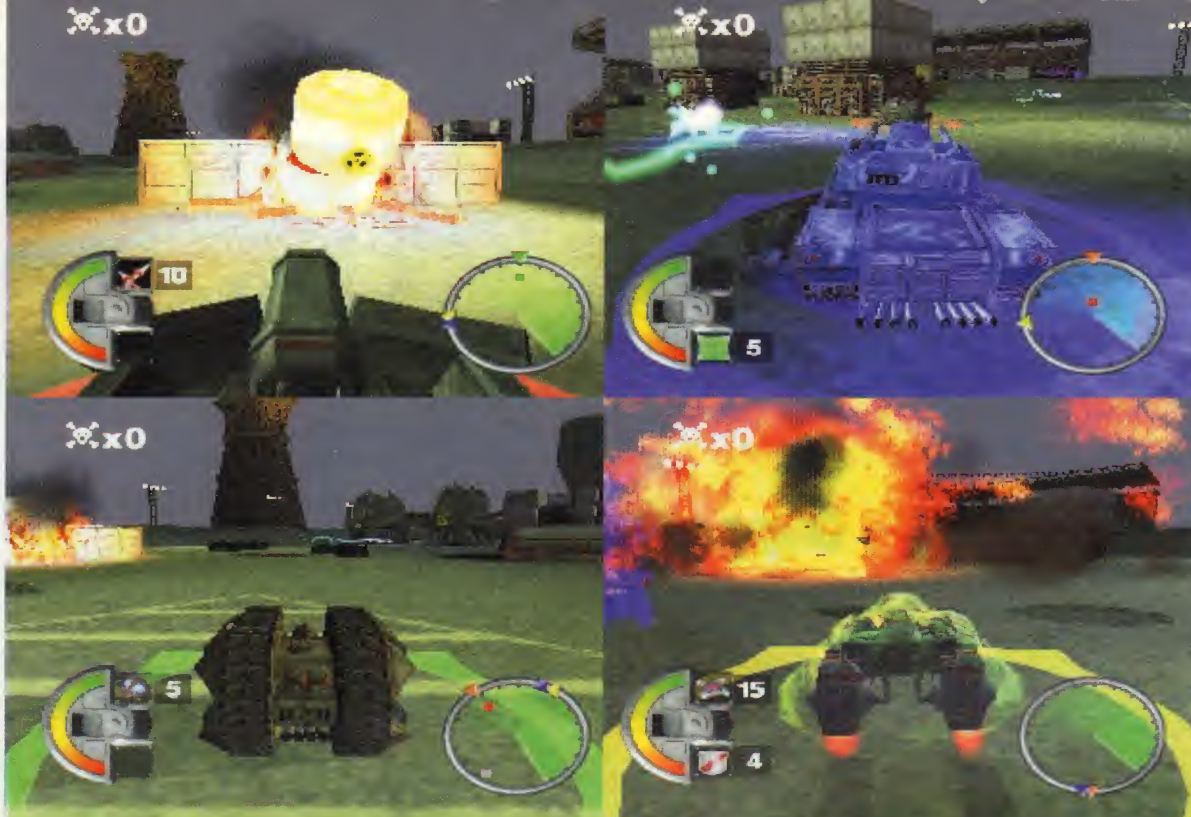
Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the basic design of the game hasn't really changed much since *Battletanx* on N64. But you'll be so wrapped up in the gameplay that this becomes a moot point. Why fiddle with a winning formula? So grab some mates to get in on some tank-blasting action and give *World Destruction League: Thunder Tanks* a go. We're almost certain that you'll be pleasantly surprised. ☐ **Jes Bickham**

Most of the arenas contain CPU-controlled enemies – or 'bots'. Here you can see a gun emplacement. Best run then.

WDL: THUNDER TANKS

Why we'd buy it:	Why we'd leave it:	An outrageous multiplayer blast, *WDL:TT* is the perfect social game. As a single-player affair, though, it tires quickly.
- Provides tremendous multiplayer fun - Suitably OTT weaponry	- Not too good as a single-player game - Annoying shouting overshadows gameplay	

Graphics	Clean and detailed with blinding explosions	08
Sound	Annoying commentary, muddy music	05
Gameplay	Joyously simple blastarama	08
Life span	Lasts a lifetime if played with friends	07

07

Meet Cain – the dashing hero of From Software's new RPG *Eternal Ring*.

ETERNAL RING

Yes, this generic Japanese RPG is as painful as it sounds…

Publisher: Ubi Soft
Developer:
From Software
Price: £39.99
Players: 1
Out: Now
Web site:
www.ubisoft.co.uk

Back story
Track down *King's Field* or *Shadow Tower* on PSone, and you'll glimpse the first attempts of Japanese coder From Software to marry role-playing with first-person combat. After deviating from that style with *Evergrace*, From Software has blessed the PS2 with its unique RPG formula in the form of *Eternal Ring*.

In the world of fantasy role-playing, there's no such thing as a carefree youth. An ancient, unwritten rule decrees that, by the age of ten, every boy-child must wake one morning to find their village ablaze, their parents dead, and a lifetime of hazy flashbacks and soul-searching torment ahead of them. It will be of no surprise then that the hero of *Eternal Ring*, Cain Morgan, complete with obligatory floppy fringe, is no exception.

These archetypal RPG traits are the first indication that this game isn't about to set the PlayStation 2 ablaze with a stunning reworking of the genre. Instead, From Software has brought us role-playing by numbers. All the in-game elements featured in *Eternal Ring* – the dungeons, the monsters, the spells and the rickety wooden villages with chatty citizens frozen to the spot – are charmless and free of the slightest sliver of originality. Worst of all, it's just plain dull.

The first 30 minutes of gameplay seemingly exist for the express purpose of putting you off the game for life. The primitive introductory cut-scene features hammy voice-acting to make you cringe, the dungeon you explore is a near-endless maze of bland, monotonous stonework and brown rock. The dire real-time combat – thanks to an unhinged decision to go with a clumsy first-person perspective – forces you into the most laughably camp fighting in recent memory. Move in close to

//All the in-game elements are charmless and free of the slightest sliver of originality//

the enemy, stab your little knife in, then run away before you take damage. And then do it again.

If you manage to last this first half hour, you will be rewarded with a change of pace. Magic gems will become collectible and once you've found enough they can be combined to create a variety of Magic Rings. Each of these sorcerous hoops then allows you to cast spells, most of which conjure up the kind of blinding projectile attacks that allow you to leave foppish blade jabbing far behind, while others raise your stats or protect you. Granted, *Eternal Ring*'s pitiful pyrotechnics are no match for the glorious sorcery of *Final Fantasy IX* on PSone or *Summoner*, but experimenting with different combinations of gems and making up new moves is a whole lot of fun.

BEHIND THE TIMES
Unfortunately though, not even the entertainment that comes with creating your own spells can detract from the inescapable tedium of the main game. Battles with ogres, giant moths, grotesque skull-faced monkeys and the odd gigantic dragon,
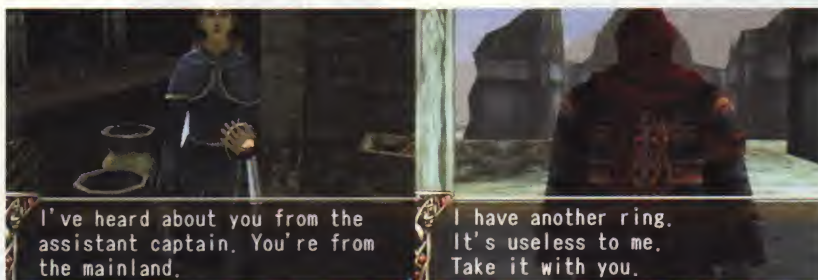
I've heard about you from the assistant captain. You're from the mainland.

I have another ring. It's useless to me. Take it with you.

Apart from the odd useful gift, you'll receive nothing but inane chat from *Eternal Ring*'s inhabitants.

RUNNING RINGS

Eternal Ring's incompetence is best demonstrated by the frustrating need to switch between rings.

As you step into the game's second main area, a deadly gas descends. Activate your Protect ring with ⓑ to keep those lungs healthy.

Meanwhile, a welcoming committee of oversized moths closes in. Switch to the Wind Cutter ring and its projectile attack with ⓞ.

But wait! The Protect ring's power has run out. So, press ⓞ and ⓑ again to reactivate its yellow goodness…

…all the while desperately trying to avoid the moths. You've got seconds to switch control back to your Wind Cutter with ⓑ…

…and just 15 seconds before you'll need to switch back to the Protect ring all over again. Fact: this farce continues for another 20 minutes.

RING-A-DING-DING!

You'll never touch a mortal blade again after getting your fingers on *Eternal Ring*'s magic halos. Six of the best...

Fire Ball
One of the prettiest rings you'll create, but also the slowest and weakest. Enemies tend to sidestep away from it.

Fire Wall
A fountain of flames that tears off into the distance, scorching anyone or anything foolish enough to get in its way.

Ice Trap
Leaves a small pool of ice on the floor, allowing you to lure a beastle over the frozen spot to stop them in their tracks.

Confusion
Meddles with the brains of dungeon dwellers – although most of *Eternal Ring*'s monsters are fairly confused already.

Tornado
That's right – a spinning vortex of calamitous wind that does heaps of damage if it should veer into an adversary.

Heal Water
With this on your finger, one stab of ⓐ will heal lost health at the expense of magic points. Handy, when you're feeling woozy.

Burying the dead after the catastrophic fire on the left. Still, it was hardly the most heavily populated village in the world, so no great loss...

only serve to display their brainless AI. A fiddly control system makes even turning on the spot a grind, and the crushing knowledge that all you'll find behind an enemy's fading corpse is another batch of featureless corridors and identical adversaries will send you to sleep in no time. Up against the deep multi-character battling of *Summoner*, *Eternal Ring* is hopelessly out of date.

ETERNAL DARKNESS

Elsewhere, there's little respite from the tiresome scrapping. Villages are relatively deserted bar the non-player characters with whom you can buy, barter or swap items with. The most taxing puzzles consist of the 'find fire ring to melt frozen door' type – yawn. It is possible to wander off around the vast map in search of adventure, but by keeping all but one area filled with beefy monsters who'll finish you off in seconds, *Eternal Ring* manages to restrict you, oh-so-subtly, to its almost totally linear path.

Most saddening of all, *Eternal Ring* has an uncanny ability to turn every one of its more promising features into something utterly detestable. The night/day system, with scenery bathed in sunset reds and twilight blues, seems a neat touch – until you're faced with the mind-numbing tedium of waiting around all night for a particular character to wake up. The multi-level bridges and walkways of later environments are alluring – until one slip ends your life and the game instantly. And, yes, even that natty gem system begins to pall when you're reduced to sweeping every cavern for tiny jewels confusingly camouflaged against the floor.

With such a staggering list of faults, niggles and flaws, it's no surprise to discover that *Eternal Ring* found its way onto Japanese shop shelves just in time for PS2's launch. This is a game that's plainly been rushed to the machine, where only the visuals aspire to 'next generation' quality. Hardcore role-playing fanatics might just be able to cope with this, but the majority of PlayStation 2 owners will throw down their daggers in disgust after meeting the 30th identical skull-faced monkey in as many minutes. ☐ **Mark Green**

Even *Eternal Ring*'s colossal bosses don't bring any decent special effects with them.

ETERNAL RING

Why we'd buy it:	Why we'd leave it:	
- Experimenting with gems and rings can be mildly enjoyable - The character voices raise the odd giggle	- Brain-numbingly monotonous play - Zombie-like adversaries - Disappointing visuals	More a hopelessly primitive first-person blaster than an RPG, *Eternal Ring* is a totally forgettable experience. Avoid.

Graphics	Bland, featureless and poorly animated	03
Sound	Decent music, but those voices…	04
Gameplay	Walk, stab, walk, shoot, walk, sleep…	03
Life span	Only juggling gems will keep you going	03

03

A tiny head means a tiny brain – which must account for this fella's questionable AI.

The stepladder matey's using to get up there is just out of shot.

Paid millions of dollars to throw balls in hoops, and still he looks miserable.

ESPN NBA 2NIGHT

EA Sports' stranglehold on the basketball market is under challenge. Game on.

Publisher: Konami
Developer: KCEO
Price: £39.99
Players: 1-8
Out: Now
Web site:
www.konami-europe.com

Back story
Konami's first crack at the PlayStation 2 b-ball world comes following a string of other EPSN titles on PSone. *ESPN Hockey Night* will be joining this title on the shelves (see review on page 111) while both skateboarding and American football are mooted to be making an ESPN-branded appearance on PS2 soon.

A brief rundown of the complex sports/videogame relationship, then. Tennis, innately simple, has been a staple diet for gamers since *Pong*. Darts is even simpler, but is inherantly rubbish. Baseball games proliferate in the States and Japan but rarely make it over here – they're generaly rubbish too. Jonah Lomu demonstrated that rugby makes an okay switch, but also that no-one cares. Football, thankfully, has been done well from *Kick Off 2* all the way up to *ISS*. And basketball? EA Sports' NBA series on the PSone managed it well enough, but it's the sport itself that makes translation difficult.

Here's basketball's problem: it's too easy, given the right genes and dedication, to be absolutely unstoppable. In football you grow to expect on-pitch ineptitude, which makes those rare moments of genius – the 40-yard strike or the poetic chip that's always just out of reach – stand out. They're spikes of adrenaline injected straight into the brain. They're peaks of genius thrust from endless midfield attrition. The point is that they hit so hard because they're so infrequent. They're unexpected, and they're glorious.

Basketball's different. When the game reaches professional perfection, it becomes less about team success and increasingly dedicated to individual failure. Attacks almost invariably end in baskets, and the crowd is on its feet for each one, but the game doesn't depend on moments of brilliance; it hinges on the moments of accidental idiocy. The fans expect the best, and *nearly* always get it – but then a basket catches the rim and bounces the wrong way, or a player is distracted by the sight of Jack Nicholson at courtside and runs straight out of bounds, and the ball gets handed to the opposition. Hello 127-111 scorelines.

PLEASURABLE MISTAKES

It's the moments where players get it wrong that turn the game. The adrenaline rush hits when the opposition fail, and where's the glory in that? Fans of dubious Eighties flick *Teen Wolf* will know the answer instinctively. The glory comes from the *style* of victory – something that remains true regardless of whether you're a shades-wearing werewolf or one of the more traditional genetic anomalies, the seven-foot superstars. So, naturally, that's what *ESPN 2Night* attempts to recreate. It knows you're

going to score – it doesn't try hard to stop you. It just wants you to do it with style.

So, once you've learnt the simple controls – essentially a button for shoot and a button for pass, though the 'fake' button also comes in handy when you want to fool the dumb computer opponents into going one way while you go another – it's time to start shooting for impact, not accuracy. And, as the loyal NBA follower will know, impact means the unmissable, towering, all-powerful dunk. Get within a reasonable distance of the hoop and, with enough momentum and a decent direction, a well timed press of the ⊗ button will send you soaring, spinning and slamming. Jump, slam, bang. The crowd go crazy, the net swooshes, the opponents grab the ball and attack. There's no chance for respite.

Except there is, because you can always call a time-out should the unrelenting pace get too

//NBA 2Night is arrogantly loveable but essentially repetitive//

The ball's in your basket one minute and your opponent's the next. It's end-to-end stuff, but does that make it more exciting?

Casually looped passes and neat ornamental flicks make the game much more watchable.

TARGET OUTSIDE INSIDE SHOOT POINT
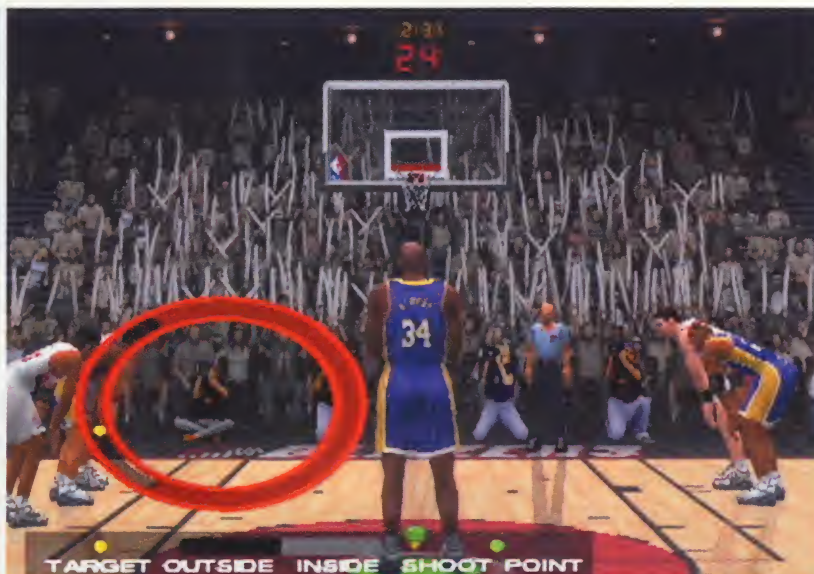
A novel analogue stick-based free throw experience ups the post-foul tension considerably.
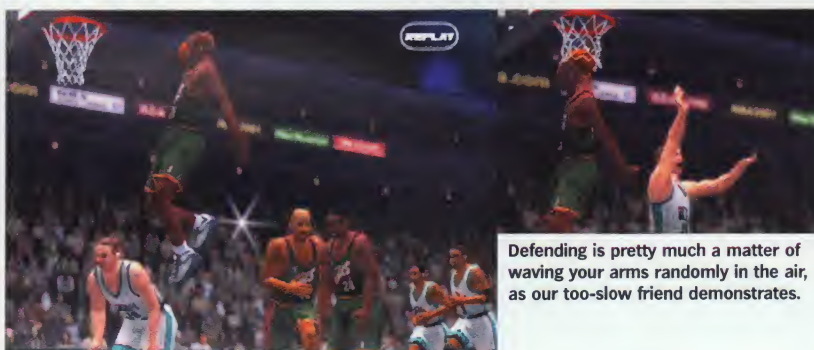
Defending is pretty much a matter of waving your arms randomly in the air, as our too-slow friend demonstrates.

much, or if you want to make a tactical switch. It's also crucially important to be aware of how long's left in each quarter. Victory is as much about timing as anything else, so successful players will watch the clock and time their baskets so their opponents have absolutely no time for reply. This means leaving microseconds, nothing more.

SHALLOW SPECTATOR SPORT

Ignore the paper-thin crowd, and concentrate on the detail of those on the court and immediately surrounding it, and you'll soon fall for NBA 2Night's imagery. Camera crews crouch, substitutes punch the air with every basket, umpires cry foul – it's incredibly atmospheric, and fairly impressive. Those familiar with the NBA will find their favourite players instantly recognisable. Those who couldn't care less about basketball might at least recognise Shaquille O'Neal as the genie from Kazaam. Whatever, the point is they're all tall, they're all detailed and they can all jump.

The graphics aren't just ornamentation, either. In a game dynamic that's so dependent on style over substance, a lot of satisfaction's derived from watching your players pull of their spectacular

moves. Everything worth watching gets an instant replay, so while the netball-style two-pointers will be hastily skipped over, anything outside the three-point line gets the camera-swooping treatment. More importantly, those anti-grav, overly self-important slam dunks appear in full gloating slow motion, essential for smug multiplayer action.

So, it's just like the real thing. Overblown, overhyped, and over here, NBA 2Night is arrogantly lovable, but essentially repetitive, and that means it's only really fun when you're playing it with friends. Even then, it's probably not going to be your skill that wins a match, it's going to be an error on the part of your opponent – and we're back to considering the paradox that is the glory of failure.

Dedicated basketball fans will live with that, and they'll most likely go nuts for the on-court atmosphere and real-world stats. Everyone else who isn't quite so interested in the sport where the tall people reign supreme might want to take a little longer to decide between buying this title and extending their Michael J Fox video collection. □ Ste Curran

ESPN NBA 2NIGHT

Why we'd buy it:	Why we'd leave it:	Does basketball make the transition to consoles well? Yes, but, as that cliche goes, you'll only really like this if you like basketball.
- Great multiplayer fun - If you squint, they look like those tall chaps off the telly	- Far too easy - It's only really an enjoyable experience as a multiplayer game	

Graphics	Slam dunks and tall lunks	07
Sound	Cute commentary, but annoying gameplay FX	07
Gameplay	Fun with friends, if repetitive	05
Life span	No friends means little play time	05

06

PlayStation.2 VERDICT

It's the tip-off, so it's tall against tall, and only the springiest giant will win.

Replays tend to make things look far more dramatic.

Don't trust the movements of your characters hands. Just look away.

Lens flare (right) adds depth to replays. Shame about the rest of the game...

DRIVING EMOTION TYPE-S

Square leaves what it knows best for a foray in to the racing genre. Should they stick to RPGs though?

General car modelling is rather crude, by anyone's standards, but instantly recognisable.

Publisher: EA
Developer: Square
Price: £39.99
Players: 1-2
Out: Now
Web site: www.square-europe.com

Back story

RPG specialist Square has toyed with the driving genre in the past, developing, perhaps predictably, a driving RPG. This is its first legitimate foray into the world of videogame racing. Sadly, it's not up to the publisher's usual standards.

The AI is impressively lazy – you can't expect your opponents to notice you on the track. Ever.

Sorry to get your hopes up, but this Paris-Dakar Pajero is utterly under-used in the game.

Square make RPGs. Ask anyone. Over the years there has been the odd excursion into other genres but given the quality of the more recent outings, Square may well prefer the public to focus solely on what it does best: visually and aurally-stunning RPGs. Yet, *Driving Emotion Type-S* is not an RPG. Boot it up and there's no lavish CGI intro. Start a game and you won't be asked if you wish to rename your car, let alone your competitors'.

Square has created a driving game. Actually, this won't surprise anyone who keeps an eye on the Japanese gaming scene seeing as *Driving Emotion Type-S* came out soon after the PS2's domestic launch last March. And if memory serves it wasn't particularly well received mainly because it wasn't particularly good. Nearly a year on, is the PAL version likely to have a better retail experience than its NTSC brother?

In a word: no. But here are a few more words explaining why...

Things start off very much like any other driving title – the main mode offers seven vehicles from five manufacturers and three circuits on which to shred your tyres. At this stage things are fairly mundane. The cars are more of the reliable than exciting type but given that you're racing against similar machinery, you feel part of the group rather than inadequate.

Until, that is, the green light flashes on, everyone accelerates smoothly away from the six car starting grid, neatly lining up for the first corner when before you know it, you're looking back at the starting grid wondering what happened while the rest of the field is happily negotiating the second apex. In time, you'll be right there with them, perhaps even leading them. But a substantial amount of torn hair may be resting on your carpet by then.

This is no exaggeration – the handling in *Type-S* is odious. Square will undoubtedly retort that it's actually genre-defining in its authenticity, that it has managed to accurately recreate the art of drafting (ie powersliding) through corners. This isn't true. Okay, it's only half true. Admittedly, the feeling of holding the back end out without it ever overtaking the front is actually well conveyed – you do get the idea that you're sliding around the track.

//There isn't a moment during a race when you can relax, not even on a straight//

While this may look exciting, sadly, it doesn't feel like it behind the wheel.

If you both have a sense of humour, two-player games can entertain for all the wrong reasons.

LAP 1/2 **POS** 4/6
TOTAL TIME 00:46:518
LAP TIME 00:46:538

And this is how driving would look if someone smeared Vaseline over your helmet visor.

AT3 116 km/h

FUZZY DUFFER

Who needs to worry about anti-aliasing when Square has invented BlurroVision™ to hide all those unsightly jagged edges...

LAP 1/2 **POS** 5/6
TOTAL TIME 00:30:633
LAP TIME 00:30:633
AT3 136

Blurry digits
Get your man to perform any kind of directional input and his hands suddenly become disciples of the great god of motion blur, ruler of the unfocused.

LAP 1/2 **POS** 4/6
TOTAL TIME 00:48:333
LAP TIME 00:48:333
AT3 116

Blurry dash
Occasionally, the whole dashboard becomes a blurred mess as the car weaves from side to side (courtesy of some intriguing handling dynamics).

LAP 1/2 **POS** 1/6
TOTAL TIME 00:38:383
LAP TIME 00:38:383
AT2 88

Blurry way
The effect may mask rough polygonal edges, but it's far from subtle. It's a matter of personal choice, perhaps, but it does rob the game of some solidity.

LAP 1/2 **POS** 4/5
TOTAL TIME 00:02:863
LAP TIME 00:02:863
AT3 91

There's a fair amount of detail once you're inside the car, including several windscreen reflections.

The problem is you're likely to be doing this far more often than you'd expect, whether you want to or not. Controlling one of the game's cars requires constant directional corrections. This cannot be emphasised enough – the nature of the vehicle dynamics ensures there isn't a moment during a race where you can relax, not even on a straight.

OUT OF CONTROL

This is largely due to the developer genuinely attempting to mimic the way the speed of a car affects the steering: low speeds require far more turns of the wheel, while the reverse is true the faster you go. Through a joypad, this effect is wildly exaggerated which makes controlling the cars something of an ordeal. And you can't use your digital arms (in cockpit view) as a visual cue either, as the animation doesn't correspond to the actual turning instructions.

With enough practise, of course, you can eventually make it around a circuit without once snaking your way along the track. Assuming you'll persevere long enough to win races, the game rewards you with extra cars and tracks. In total, some 40-odd models from a selection of 11 international manufacturers get to compare egos on seven racing circuits. The menu of cars is reasonably apt. There's an over reliance on road-legal sports cars and a disappointingly limited choice of GT and rally models, perhaps, but it remains a desirable assortment. The game's structure isn't particularly revolutionary, either. And crucially, like the handling, it's flawed. Cars are divided into four classes depending on

performance yet there's nothing to stop you from entering a higher spec model into a low rank race, resulting in an undemanding (steering troubles aside) – and ultimately, unrewarding – win. Hardly balanced proceedings, you'll agree.

If you're expecting a final redemptive paragraph, sorry to disappoint. *Driving Emotion Type-S* hasn't got some hitherto undiscovered miracle game-saving feature lurking in a corner of the start-up screen. Yes, there's a two-player mode that proves reasonably entertaining provided both drivers are equally matched. But it's a mere wheel nut compared to the chassis-sized problems the game suffers from. Add to these unreliable AI, monstrous loading times and fluffy visuals (see Fuzzy Duffer) and you're faced with a game that, although challenging and capable of delivering genuine enjoyment, offers rewards too few and far between for most normal players to both carrying on. And they won't. □ **João Diniz Sanchez**

DRIVING EMOTION TYPE-S

Why we'd buy it:	Why we'd leave it:	A standard – if somewhat anorexic – racing affair that is only remarkable due to tiresome handling dynamics and very mediocre structure.
- Includes some desirable machinery - Good sense of (realistic) speed - Because GT3 has been delayed (again)	- Obnoxious handling - Lack of circuits - Frustrating AI - Off-road feature dreadfully underused - Long loading times	

Graphics	Blurry but reasonably detailed	07
Sound	Good quality but weak engine note	04
Gameplay	Dreadful handling characteristics	03
Life span	Challenging (for all the wrong reasons)	07

04

PlayStation.2 VERDICT

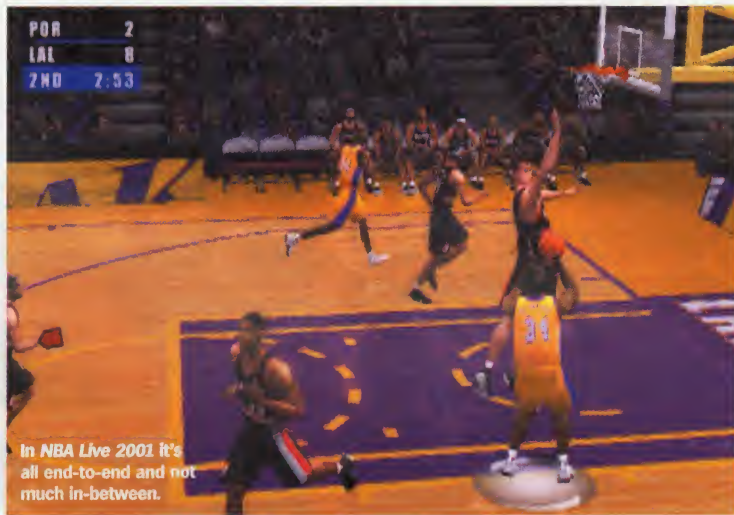As is the norm in EA's games the Replay mode allows for some great camera angles.

The One-On-One mode is a good chance to practice your shooting and slam dunking.

In *NBA Live 2001* it's all end-to-end and not much in-between.

NBA LIVE 2001

Can EA Sports breathe new life into the basketball genre or does this miss the backboard?

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Sports
Price: £39.99
Players: 1-4
Out: Now
Web site:
www.easports.com

Back story
The *NBA Live* series began life on the PSone with *NBA Live '96*. Similarly named titles followed every year, with not much changing but the player names and slightly improved graphics. *NBA Live 2001* is the first version of the franchise on PS2 and accompanies the sixth release on PSone of the game with the same title.

EA Sports is a master at giving games reviewers a hard time. It's all too easy to rant about the way its catalogue of titles look – the attention to detail, the wealth of stats and how the real-life teams are all present and correct. Waxing lyrical about these fundamentals, though, often means that sloppy reviews and potential purchasers can miss what actually makes a game enjoyable – gameplay.

On start up *NBA Live 2001* looks like every other EA Sports game – the same logo, front end and menu system. Even the modes – Play Now, Season, Playoff – will be recognisable to EA's fans and are joined by One-On-One, which pits two players against each other in a downtown basketball court. Each mode allows you to decide on teams, players, positions, substitutions and which division you wish to play in.

Once on court, the only real way to describe the visuals is that, yes, they are slightly better than the previous *NBA* incarnation. The players are well-drawn (being modelled, of course, on real NBA players) but still lope around the court with very exaggerated movements. On the other hand the background activity is surprisingly static – the crowd looking like cardboard cut-outs – with perhaps the floor itself being most impressive, achieving a satisfying level of shininess. But it's hard to get excited about that for too long...

Onto the game. Controlling your players is easy to grasp and utilises a wide range of offensive and defensive moves. While attacking you can fake, turbo, switch and crossover without much difficulty, and while defending, hand check, steal and face up are incorporated. The rules of the court differ depending on whether you've selected Simulation or Arcade mode. Arcade allows you to foul and run off the court without being penalised, while the former is exactly what it suggests and uses proper

NBA rules. In one-player the way the game is structured provides plenty of opportunity for immersion, especially in the extensive Season mode, and multiplayer will no doubt inspire many a late-night session in with the beers.

At this point it would be easy to give the game a high score and go home. But as is often the case with sports sims the question must be asked, will *NBA Live 2001* draw in those players not that acquainted with the sport? Probably not. The game predominantly relies on enjoying *Live*'s replication of all those rules, player names and stats. Those who just want to pick-up-and-play will have a hard time here, despite hit-⊗-twice-and-you're-playing being an EA Sports trademark.

People enjoy EA games. *SSX* managed to attract snowboarding virgins, *FIFA* manages to do it with a spangly version of football, and even *Swing Away Golf* will get people onto the fairways. But to the average British gamesplayer what relevance is there that the Detroit Nuggets team are faithfully represented, or that you can play with the Fifties LA Lakers team if you so wish? Probably not much. We just want to enjoy ourselves. In this respect *NBA Live 2001* fails. ☐ George Walter

NBA LIVE 2001

Why we'd buy it:	Why we'd leave it:	
- Because you love American basketball	- You're fed up of derivative EA games	EA's assembly line aesthetics triumph again, but essentially an average basketball sim.
- It's a more than proficient simulation	- There'll be another slightly better one out next year	

Graphics	Glossy and well animated	07
Sound	Commentary and FX are well implemented	07
Gameplay	Very, very ordinary	04
Life span	*NBA Live 2002* anyone?	05

06

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

Can't wait?

PSone ™

Edited by: Ryan Butt/Lee Hall

Goalkeepers are now less reliable, but seem more agile due to far better animation.

ISS PRO EVOLUTION 2

Thrilling action, realistic animations and that 'on-the-pitch' feel. Welcome to the anti-*FIFA*...

Publisher: Konami
Developer: KCET
Price: £29.99
Players: 1-4
Out: March

ISS Pro Evolution 2 is not only the best football game ever, it's up there with the best sports games in history. It will take a lot of practise to become a great player in this new version though – for lovers of *Evolution* and newcomers alike – but that fact ultimately proves a strength.

There's so much scope for improvement that once you've grasped the basics of passing and shooting fluidly there's a raft of advanced techniques to master. After only a few multiplayer games you'll be playing tentative chipped through-balls, trying your hand at one-twos and even using the lob command to drift shots over the goalie. When you finally dummy the 'keeper and slot home for the first time you'll bellow with genuine joy. Forget the claims of rivals: this is football.

At first, *ISS Pro Evolution 2* feels a little stickier than the previous version, but it soon becomes

//When you dummy the 'keeper and slot home for the first time you'll feel genuine joy//

apparent that more than any other football game, you are required to think like you're on the pitch. The number of variables involved in a game – even in a single shot are vast – meaning you never feel like you're stringing the same tired move together. The already strong ball physics and character animations have been pushed even further to create a thrilling mix of back-headers, scissor-kicks and parried shots. The introduction of far more realistic deflections means *Evolution*'s legendary penalty area action is even more nerve-racking this time out.

Crossing is another big area of improvement. Heading home those diagonals is a delight.

The art of crossing is far better implemented, which now sees the ball spun in ahead of your attacker instead of falling limply behind him. Furthermore, players no longer stumble and stop attacking the ball when an opponent traps it on the edge of their own box, making for more competitive encounters.

The wonderful Master League mode has been extended so that you can guide one of 24 European and South American clubs to promotion and then to the title in the big league. It's best played in two-player, team-mates mode, but remains the most rewarding one-player mode in any sports game.

The game is only really let down by iffy presentation, an element so expertly applied to its EA rivals. Poor commentary, simplistic menu screens and awful sound are nothing but niggles that barely detract from the game's status as an all-time football classic. □ **Lee Hall**

PSone ™

ISS PRO EVOLUTION 2

Graphics
Superb animations and realistic players **09**

Sound
Naff commentary and music **04**

Gameplay
Plays like real footie. A pure joy **10**

Life span
Lasts forever in two-player mode **10**

No other game gives you such a repertoire of moves and great physics to boot. This will not be surpassed.

10
VERDICT

The Master league remains the most engaging one-player mode in any PSone sports game.

THE EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE
Get Inca the groove, Disney-style.

Apart from dancing mat classic *Jungle Book Groove Party*, there has been little inspirational software from the Disney stable. Based on the latest animated epic, *The Emperor's New Groove* halts this trend and is undoubtedly the best Disney tie-in game available on the PSone.

Argonaut (fresh from *Alien Resurrection*) has used games like *Spyro The Dragon* as its inspiration and the result is a treat for platform fans. The graphics are awash with a colourful vibrancy that brilliantly recreates the movie. Couple this with smooth gameplay and *TENG* suddenly becomes an inviting prospect, let down only by the unoriginal gameplay. ☐ **Ryan Butt**

Anyone played *Spyro The Dragon*? The Emperor's New Groove's developer has...

PS one ™
Exhilarating to look at and surprisingly addictive to play, despite the unoriginal format. Should be on your list if you're hunting for a cute platform game.

08
VERDICT

LMA MANAGER 2001
Got the savvy to be a Fergie? Then come and prove it.

Oh how we all got on Keegan's back when our boys suddenly forgot how to play football. But isn't it down to the individual? Not according to the world of Codemasters' *LMA Manager 2001*.

The beauty of this game is that it's compelling enough to keep you interested regardless of how into the genre you are. The menu systems give you an immense sense of freedom to train-up players, sign imports and develop your ground, but can be avoided if you just want to pick the team. It isn't as in-depth as, say, *Alex Ferguson's Player Manager 2001*, but the slick engine and the far-superior highlights make this a game that everyone can lose months of their lives to. ☐ **Ryan Butt**

You'll be singing when you're winning. And if you're not winning, do a runner. Like Keegan.

PS one ™
A highly polished management game that doesn't intimidate with endless menus and statistics.

09
VERDICT

POINT BLANK 3
Lock and load with the most pointless shooter around.

With the eagerly-awaited *Time Crisis* sequel still some way off completion, Namco has at least given us another excuse to dust off our light-guns and resume waving them at the TV like deranged gangsters. *Point Blank 3* features a bundle of brand-new stages – the best of which allows you to shoot balls into a goal, pick-off *Galaga*-style space invaders and even have a pop at Mokujin from *Tekken 3*. Like previous *Point Blank* games, the content won't keep you amused for long and the simplistic nature of shooting colourful targets soon wears thin on your tolerance, so the longevity of *Point Blank 3* is questionable. Better just wait for *Time Crisis: Project Titan* then. ☐ **Ryan Butt**

Any game that allows you to shoot the bark off of *Tekken*'s Mokujin has got to be good, right?

PS one ™
Plenty of shooting stages to exercise your twitching trigger finger, but it won't keep you enthralled for long.

06
VERDICT

ALSO RELEASED...

Selfish glory runs in the warped football game **LIBERO GRANDE INTERNATIONAL**... Hunt them goblins in **LEGEND OF DRAGOON**... Get wild and wet with boat racing in **AQUA GT**... Outlandish pant designs and alarmingly short fights in **ULTIMATE FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP**... A 3D remake of old skool classic **GALAGA**... Another 3D remake of an old skool classic with **FROGGER 2**... Choreographed rescue operations in **RAINBOW SIX: ROGUE SPEAR**... A PSone version of PS2 tank-'em-up **WDL: THUNDER TANKS**... And not an inch of bum cleavage to be seen in **POWER DIGGERZ**... For the latest PSone news, reviews, previews and playable demos, see **OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE**...

PS one ™

ROUNDUP

NEWS
SONY MINI-SCREEN
The official Sony mini-screen attachment will not be available to buy in the UK until at least August, the company has announced. It should be available in Japan in March, though no price has yet been decided on. SCE has confirmed that the add-on, which clips behind the disc lid of your PSone, will come with an adaptor that allows you to play games in a car. The news signals another leap in the quality of mobile gaming and could consign the phrase 'Are we there yet?' to history.
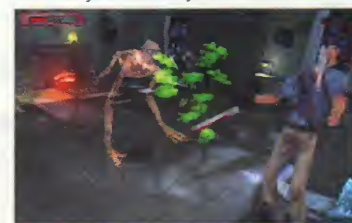
PREVIEW
EVIL DEAD: HAIL TO THE KING
The black humour and horror of Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead* trilogy will shortly possess your PSone. Actor Bruce Campbell provides a cheesy range of one-liners in keeping with the tone of the movies, in which he starred as Ash, a dimwitted monster masher. The chainshaw which replaces Ash's left hand is your most lethal tool of terror as you plod through a 3D action adventure with point and click elements. Think *Resident Evil* meets *The Three Stooges*

PREVIEW
C-12
SCEE's Cambridge Studios (*Medievil*) is polishing off another 3D action adventure, this time in the *Syphon Filter* mould. *C-12* boasts some of the best graphics ever seen on PSone and plays like a cross between *Metal Gear Solid* and *Resident Evil*. As Lieutenant Vaughan, leader of the human resistance movement, you speed through a series of post-apocalyptic Earth settings taking on alien bugs intent on wiping-out the human race. Expect *C-12* this March.

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media

DVD/INTERNET/PRINT/MUSIC

PS2 doesn't just play games, you know. Here's some other stuff you might like…

Text by: Sam Richards/Lee Hart/Niki Earp

Make it so! Patrick Stewart as leader of the X-Men, Professor X.

X-MEN

20th Century Fox/£19.99/12 March

Film: Directors always run the gauntlet when bringing legendary comic book characters to the big screen. Bryan 'Usual Suspects' Singer has performed the required balancing act with aplomb, allowing for Storm, Cyclops et al to demonstrate their mutie powers within the context of a reasonably gripping drama. In truth, it's largely the presence of Ian McKellen as chief baddie Magneto who adds serious weight to a flimsy plot, although Hugh Jackman as Wolverine wrestles with the consequences of his super-powers in an impressively gruff manner.

The film sets up a three-way battle between the American government, the evil mutant Magneto and the good mutant Xavier, whose X-Men troupe are charged with simultaneously diffusing intolerance among humans and neutering Magneto's destructive plans. Many hi-tech battles ensue. **SR**

Features: Interview with Singer. Spoof news documentary charting the Anti-Mutant bill through Congress. Hugh Jackman's original screen test. Deleted scenes and trailers are also included plus clues to the sequel.

Verdict: Teen-angst trash, but it's flashy teen-angst trash executed with true flair. **7/10**

Rebecca Romijn-Stamos as Mystique: the disc's interview feature proves she looks better without the make-up.

Brad Pitt as a bit-part Pikey? Vinnie Jones'll be acting next. Oh...

Zut alors! A French film without noisy sex or drawn-out existential ennui.
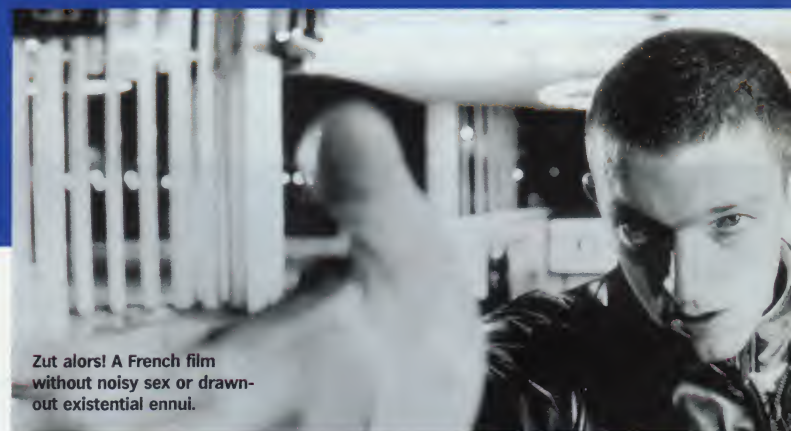
SNATCH
Columbia TriStar/£19.99/Out now

Film: Guy Ritchie may be the popular scapegoat for the current wave of mockney gangster culture sweeping the nation – hello *The Getaway* – but you can't blame Mr Madonna for revisiting his patented formula. If you liked *Lock, Stock And Two Smoking Barrels* you will like *Snatch*, as the two movies are indeed very similar.

Take a couple of loveable East End chancers. Then take an unloveable gangland kingpin, an ex-KGB nutter, a jewel thief, a cartel of clueless crims on the make, a pretend-Jewish diamond dealer played by Mike Reid as Frank Butcher and Brad Pitt as a pikey boxing champ. Oh, and Vinnie Jones. Give them all stupid nicknames and stir vigorously until a classic farce emerges. **SR**

Features: An amusingly inept commentary from Ritchie and Producer Matthew Vaughn where they forget their actors' names. the second disc is rammed with deleted scenes, storyboards, interviews, behind-the-scenes footage and more, making for a very fine package all in all.

Verdict: Scummier than Ritchie's previous effort but equally as charming. **7/10**

LA HAINE
Tartan/£19.99/Out now

Film: *La Haine* is a teen film with a difference, actually reflecting the lives of its target audience and capturing the mood of an increasingly marginalised underclass of French society. With no money, no prospects and seemingly no hope of escaping the criminal whirlpool, the young, multi-racial gangs on the Parisien mean streets are a riot waiting to happen.

Tension boils over when police viciously beat a 16-year-old kid they have in custody and put him in a coma. The teenagers on his estate prepare a violent reaction to this police brutality and for 24 hours Paris becomes a maelstrom of hate and violence. At the centre of the storm are three friends who find a pistol lost by a plain clothes policeman. They decide that a fitting act of revenge would be to kill a cop with a cop's gun – and so begins a night-time odyssey that can only end in tragedy. **LH**

Features: Transcriptions of interviews with Director Mathieu Kassovitz and stars Vincent Cassel, Hubert Koundé and Saïd Taghmaoul.

Verdict: A powerful examination of urban decay presented on a poor disc. **7/10**

"The Dunkirk landings, that was us too. And Winston Churchill was a Yank."

George W Bush's inauguration wasn't well-received in space either.

U-571
Entertainment In Video/£19.99/Out now

Film: The course of World War II turned in the allies' favour when the Royal Navy intercepted a German U-boat and captured its precious Enigma machine – the device used by the Nazis to send coded instructions to its fleet. The genius mathematicians at Bletchley Park then went to work decoding the Enigma, eventually allowing us to spy on the Germans' plans and virtually ensuring victory in the naval wars. That's the truth anyway; the Hollywood version is somewhat different...

U-571 tells the story of a courageous US submarine crew who capture a U-boat and its Enigma machine. What follows is a predictable submarine movie littered with embarrassing historical inaccuracies. Still for all its blatant pilfering, *U-571* is good, old-fashioned entertainment performed convincingly by a quality cast and delivering enough thrills to temporarily quell any patriotic indignation. **LH**

Features: Director's commentary, archive footage of the seizure of a U-boat and fascinating interviews with naval officers and Enigma experts, including David Balme, the Royal Navy commander who was the first man to capture an Enigma machine.

Verdict: Lacking in originality but delivers action and tension. **6/10**

INDEPENDENCE DAY
Fox/£24.99/Out now

Film: *Independence Day* is so bad that many critics excused its shortcomings as a tongue-in-cheek attempt to recapture the amateurish feel of the Fifties sci-fi B-movies. This couldn't be further from the truth.

The unholy partnership of Roland Emmerich and Dean Devlin (which later brought us *Godzilla*) was actually aiming for an epic life-affirming tale with the vomit-inducing message that, hey, we're all humans here so why don't we all just try and get along? The dialogue is diabolical, the performances uniformly atrocious and the plotting so stupid it almost beggars belief – Will Smith flies a UFO as if he'd built the thing, the aliens' computer technology being strangely compatible with our own.

This double DVD release features both the original cinematic release and an extended cut with eight additional minutes. They really are spoiling us. **LH**

Features: Two boring commentaries accompany the movie but there's a second disc packed with quality extras. These include the original ending, artwork, storyboards and three lengthy featurettes, the best of which is the *ID4 Invasion* mockumentary with its 'real' UFO footage.

Verdict: A great package, shame the film's one of the worst blockbusters ever. **4/10**

›› ALSO RELEASED
Maybe Baby Warners £15.99/**Funny Games** Tartan Video £19.99/**Sleeper** MGM £15.99/**Dogma** Entertainment In Video £19.99/
The Living Daylights MGM £19.99 /**Licence To Kill** MGM £19.99/**The Flintstones: Viva Rock Vegas** Columbia Tristar £17.99

PHOTO: MOVIESTORE COLLECTION

Ah, don't you just miss the Eighties? Such quiet and innocent times...

SCARFACE

Universal/£19.99/Out now

Film: It's 1980 and in the battle against the commies, President Carter opens Miami Harbour to 125,000 Cuban refugees. Fidel Castro takes this opportunity to empty his prisons and ship the inhabitants to the US. Tony Montana (Al Pacino) is one of the prisoners who wastes no time in living out his own American Dream – involving grisly violence, gang wars and incestuous desire.

Brian De Palma's film encapsulates the Eighties' prioritising of style over content, outstaying its welcome and providing a stage for unlikeable characters with more money than sense. But Pacino's manic performance fairly snorts us into the tragicomic world of Montana and, like witnessing a car crash, it's difficult to tear your eyes away. A classic crime drama. **LH**

Features: Deleted scenes rightly cut from an already overlong film, plus an excellent Making Of documentary with contributions from the main players.

Verdict: The ultimate cocaine movie: crazy, shallow, violent, out of control... **8/10**

The OPS2 editorial meeting took a turn for the worse when Fitz arrived...

THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW

20th Century Fox/£24.99/Out now

Film: Richard O'Brien's cult film of his equally cultish Seventies musical brings the riotous stage show alive on the silver screen. His warped reworking of the Frankenstein legend concerns the story of 'scientist' Frank-N-Furter and his Adonis creation Rocky, making the sexual subtext the driving force of this magnum opus.

O'Brien shamelessly fuses B-movie takes on horror and sci-fi in his unique and intoxicating vision, incorporating brilliant performances from Susan Sarandon (Janet Weiss), Barry Bostwick (Brad Majors) and Tim Curry (Frank). Meatloaf cameos as Eddie the biker while O'Brien himself stars as butler Riff Raff – Christopher Biggins can also be seen doing the Time Warp. Yum.

Almost deserving of its own genre, this anti-musical sticks two fingers up at Andrew Lloyd-Webber while nurturing a devoted fanbase who make this movie an event every time it is shown. **NE**

Features: This 25th anniversary edition DVD is big on quantity although thin on quality. There are a few gems, such as the impromptu VH1 acoustic performance of the Time Warp from O'Brien. The documentary is worth watching, as are the actor interviews but endless outtakes, deleted scenes, alternate endings and karaoke versions of songs are mere fillers.

Verdict: Vivid, hilarious and truly-mind expanding. Pull on your fishnets and bring your toast. **8/10**

Tom Hanks puts in an amazing performance for Saving Private Ryan. Now, about Bachelor Party...

TOP 10 WAR MOVIES ON DVD

Bridge on the River Kwai
Columbia TriStar/£22.99
Film: British soldiers in a Japanese POW camp keep a stiff upper lip and whistle Colonel Bogey as they struggle to build a bridge under the leadership of the almost psychotically single-minded Alec Guinness. And then they blow it up.
Features: Making Of documentary. Movie School featurette. History of the actual events.

The Guns of Navarone
Columbia TriStar/£19.99
Film: Hugely enjoyable 'guys on a mission' film with an all-star cast of Allied commandos – Gregory Peck, David Niven, Richard Harris and more – plotting to destroy the gigantic guns that could win World War II for the Nazis.
Features: Director's commentary. Memories of Navarone documentary. Four featurettes.

The Great Escape
MGM/£15.99
Film: The perennial Bank Holiday favourite may have a whiff of over-familiarity but it's an absolute masterpiece nonetheless. Packed with memorable scenes such as Steve McQueen's thwarted getaway, great performances and an all-time classic score. Irresistible entertainment.
Features: Return To The Great Escape documentary. US theatrical trailer.

Cross Of Iron
Warners/£12.99
Film: Sam Peckinpah brought grit and brutality to this tale of the German army fighting on the Russian front. James Coburn is the Nazi-hating Sergeant Steiner, rebelling against his superiors and trying to keep his men alive. So powerful it'll give you shellshock. "The greatest war film ever made," according to Orson Welles.
Features: None.

Apocalypse Now
Paramount/£19.99
Film: Hideously over-schedule and over-budget, blighted by illness, breakdowns and drug-fuelled egomania. Coppola's journey into film-making's heart of darkness is the perfect mirror image of the actual madness of the Vietnam war.
Features: Deleted scenes. Commentary from Coppola.

Das Boot
Columbia TriStar/£19.99
Film: The best submarine movie you'll ever see offers a war is hell message from the German perspective, as we experience the sweaty claustrophobia and heart-stopping perils of life inside a U-boat at the end of WWII.
Features: Making Of documentary. Cast and crew commentary. Theatrical trailer.

Platoon
MGM/£15.99
Film: Charlie Sheen is the rookie soldier, Willem Dafoe and Tom Berenger the sergeants shaping sheen's life during the nightmare of Vietnam. Arguably Oliver Stone's most personal and impressive film to date.
Features: Theatrical trailer.

Glory
Columbia TriStar/£19.99
Film: The story of America's first black infantry unit in the Civil War, based on the letters of the young, white Northerner who led them against the South. An educational, moving film that brought both Morgan Freeman and Denzel Washington to prominence.
Features: Director's commentary. Three featurettes. Deleted scenes.

Saving Private Ryan
Paramount/£19.99
Film: Beginning with a peerless, senses-shattering landing on Omaha Beach and ending with some unpalatable flag-waving Spielberg's drama is an intelligent examination of heroism illuminated by the most realistic battle scenes ever committed to film.
Features: Into the Breach – a message from Spielberg about the D-Day landings.

The Thin Red Line
Fox/£19.99
Film: Terence Malick's WWII epic account of the US forces battling the Japanese in the Pacific. A masterful meditation on the nature of war and the impact on those caught up in it, this is a film for those who consider Private Ryan too pat.
Features: Melanesian songs. Theatrical trailer.

TEXT: LEE HART

Daft Punk as they now prefer to be photographed. Anonymous, but still damn funky.

PHOTO: YOSUKE KOMATSU

SLEEVENOTES (◎)

Using the power of your PS2 with this month's best CDs.

DAFT PUNK Discovery (Virgin)

Who? French disco house pioneers return as their robot selves with air guitars and regular cohorts such as funk crooner Romanthony in tow.

Highlights: The superlative glitter-punch disco of *High Life* and the strident R&B of *Short Circuit*. Daft Punk want their dancefloor crown back now.

Lowlights: When *Veridis Quo* goes a bit *Switched On Bach*. Too much Camembert before bedtime, boys.

Verdict: *Discovery* is retro-futuristic cool written in a LED font. Pretenders to the disco house crown are duly shamed. *Everybody, One More Time.* **8/10**

JENNIFER LOPEZ J-Lo (Epic)

Who? The rump-wiggling sexpot whose decision to dump Puff Daddy was rather more inspired than her decision to make a second album.

Highlights: *Love Don't Cost A Thing* and *I'm Real* are the obvious hits. Cool, but a bit like Destiny's Child without the added girl power sass or robo-funk basslines.

Lowlights: File the rest of the record in the drawer marked 'filler' where the lazy identikit R&B and Latin AOR on offer falls to arouse.

Verdict: In-demand Jen apparently doesn't have "the three minutes it takes to light a cigarette." We don't have the hour necessary to listen to this toss. **4/10**

THE DIVINE COMEDY Regeneration (Parlophone)

Who? Neil Hannon sensibly opting to bury that pretentious fop persona and return to his songwriting roots. Stately, pastoral pop prevails.

Highlights: The Beatlesy burlesque of *Bad Ambassador* is the obvious melodic zenith. *Lost Property* and *Eye Of The Needle* also impress.

Lowlights: The eyebrow is still occasionally a little too arched and the last two tracks tend to descend into tuneless whimsy.

Verdict: Much like U2, another Irishman rejects irony's false doctrines and realises that good, honest songwriting is probably the best get-out clause. **7/10**

RAE & CHRISTIAN Sleepwalking (Grand Central/!K7)

Who? Manc beatmasters able to pull some impressive favours for this, their second long player. Bobby Womack and The Pharcyde top the guest list.
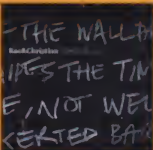
Highlights: *Hold Us Down*, featuring the voice of reggae's Joe Pasquale, Cedric Myton. Bobby Womack's sublime contributions are equally awe-inspiring.

Lowlights: *Trailing In The Wake* and *Vai Viver A Vida* form a not entirely welcome New Age interlude in the middle section of the album.

Verdict: *Sleepwalking* would be the best British soul album since *Club Classics Vol. 1*, if only there weren't so many Americans on it. **8/10**

THE EXPERIMENTAL POP BAND The Tracksuit Trilogy (City Slang)

Who? Grizzled Bristol scene veterans whose catchy beat poems combine learned wisdom with teenage fantasy. They should be massive, but aren't yet. Obviously.

Highlights: For cheap disco thrills and innuendo, *Emotion* and and *I Like It*. For the inevitable messy comedown, *Narcotic Days* and *Remember*.

Lowlights: *Casual Sex* is a dirty weekend too far. Startling melodies are sparse throughout and the instrumentals seem futile.

Verdicts: Unfortunately, there isn't really one killer track with which to slay unbelievers, continued obscurity beckons. **6/10**

>>ALSO RELEASED

Fun Lovin' Criminals Loco (Chrysalis)/**Troublemakers** Doubts And Convictions (Guidance)/ **South** From Here On In (Mo'Wax)/**Smut Peddlers** Porn Again (Rawkus)/**Tortoise** Standards (Warp)/**Spacer** The Beamer (Pussyfoot)
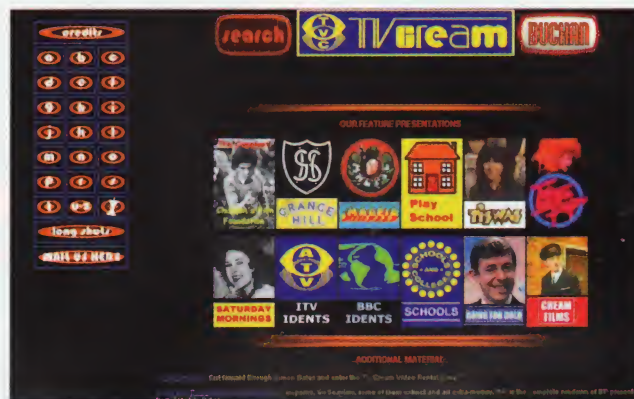
TV CREAM
tv.cream.org

Swat up on pub chatter and re-live hours of misspent youth sat in front of the TV with this magical museum of yesterday's TV. We're not talking Fanny Craddock and *Watch With Mother*, we're talking *The Mysterious Cities Of Gold*, Sunday afternoon brain-melter *Super Gran*, Saturday morning tosh *Number 73* with the hairy lipped Ms Sandi Toksvig and *Knightmare*, the adventure show which took great pleasure in blinding young children then throwing them off cliffs or into the jaws of a slavering beast. *Howard's Way*, *The New Schmoo*, euro-slop *Going For Gold*, *Benji, Zax and The Alien Prince* are all present and correct. Once you get your fill of TV nostalgia then take a trip to the tuck-shop of yesteryear. Wagon Wheels really *were* bigger in the old days, Pacers existed and Snickers were called Marathons. Prepare to be amazed, you'll feel like a ten-year-old again. **BL**
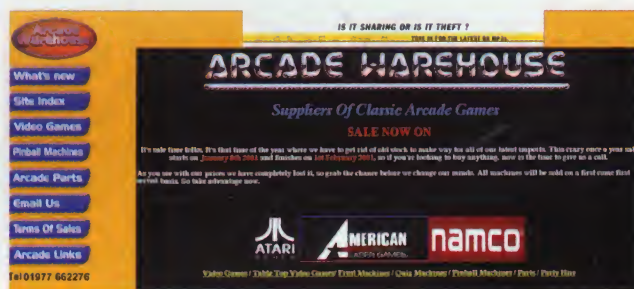
ARCADE WAREHOUSE
www.arcadewarehouse.com

Fancy collecting all your favourite arcade games from days gone by? Then check out Arcade Warehouse, a site dedicated to selling old arcade boards, pinball machines and anything you would find residing in a dark corner at an end of the pier amusement centre. Remember *Operation Thunderbolt*? Yours for £350. *Chase HQ*? £350 too! Okay, so these are big boys toys and delivery is extra but if you have the money then go pick up a bargain. Now, how much for the original *Time Pilot*… **BL**

THE TOP FIVE

Can't get your hands on a PlayStation 2? Then try these auction sites out… You never know what you may find!

1. www.futureauctions.co.uk
Clear, concise and, um, owned by us. It's gotta be good then, hasn't it? BUY NOW!

2. www.amazon.co.uk
Well known site where PS2s are going like hot cakes.

3. www.aukland.com
Apans the globe so you never know what you might find.

4. www.swapitshop.co.uk
Some strange soul might be fed up with their PS2. Maybe.

5. www.ebay.com
It's American but if you're desperate, have a look.

TEXT: SAM RICHARDS

TRIGGER HAPPY
Author: Steven Poole/**Publisher:** 4th Estate/
Price: £7.99/**See:** www.4thestate.co.uk

It seems fashionable to write cultural histories of videogames but *Trigger Happy* has several advantages over its competitors. For a start, it's not American. Secondly, it's not full of retro-game nostalgia. Thirdly, it actually explores the psychology and philosophy of videogaming, venturing confidently down academic avenues with the enthusiasm of a fan.

Each chapter investigates one element of the videogame experience – plot, graphics, AI, etc – and traces its history through many eras of gaming, referencing classics like *Robotron* and *Elite*.

First published a year ago, *Trigger Happy* has been revised and updated to include PlayStation 2. If you already own the book, don't be swayed by this clever marketing ploy – a new afterword slating the PS2 launch line-up but actually written last September hardly constitutes new insight. However, if this tome has eluded your attention so far, snap it up immediately lest you continue with your game-playing unenlightened. **SR**

Mags we like

COM.X: ISSUE ZERO
Frequency: Bi-monthly/**Price:** £TBC/
See: www.comxcomics.com

While the success of Grant Morrison, Alan Moore, Brian Bolland, Mark Millar et al is admirable, British comic creators have always had to cross the Atlantic to achieve mainstream success. Brit comics have traditionally meant a stint on *2000 AD*, or a 'critically acclaimed' strip for the small press scene. com.x hope to change all that by creating a series of US-inspired 'popcult' titles that intends to prove that us Brits can publish as well as write.

Content so far is limited to *Issue Zero* (pictured). It's an eclectic compilation of characters that range from Bazooka Jules (a Tank Girl for 2001) to Puncture (noir vigilanteism), all created by such Brit luminaries as John Higgins (*Batman*, *Judge Dredd*), Liam McCormack-Sharp (*Spider-man*, *X-Men*) and Trevor Harsaine (*2000 AD*).
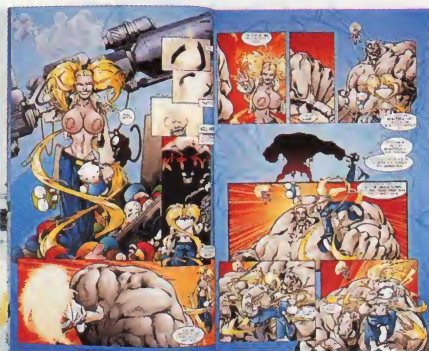
All of which is great but why is it in *OPS2*? Because com.x comes out of department.x, a design agency that has worked in the games industry on everything from a *Silent Hill* graphic novel to the packaging for Konami's *ZOE*. com.x are actively pushing their original characters as potential PS2 games and next issue, we'll let you know just how they want to do it. From the obvious talent on display, we hope they're successful. **MG**

Gaming content: if the boys are successful in their venture, all of it!

*Issue one of com.x is now at the printers. Try Forbidden Planet (Tel: 0207 836 4179).

Tips, tactics, tricks, cheats. Want to rip your new games to shreds? Welcome to the section that's strictly for the HardCore…

Hello – and thank God you're hear. It's nice to have a spot of human company in the sink cupboard/HardCore nerve centre. In-between talking to my new best friend ever, Hwoarang the Vim Bottle and fashioning a lock pick from a splinter of game casing it's been a rewarding month teasing, cajoling and shaking all sorts of treats from a batch of hot PS2 titles. This month, we've got possibly too detailed maps and short cut pointers for the first three SSX courses. Ever performed a 720° Stiffy on an airship? No, apart from that incident? Well now you can. Then there are the usual choice codes for top games like *Rayman Revolution* and *Unreal Tournament*. Oh, and a hilarious hidden movie in the credits of *Summoner* to finish things off with. See you next month. Please?

Paul Fitzpatrick
Staff Writer

HELP ME!

If you've got any special requests for tips, hints, codes or advice (providing it exists) I'm your dutiful manservant. In fact it's just lovely to know there are people out there who know my name. One day I might be able to join the happy people like you. For now I'm content to just lend my services to make your gaming life that bit more enjoyable. Write to me at: Hardcore, *Official PlayStation 2 Magazine*, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. Electrical cyberpost to PS2@futurenet.co.uk.

SSX

Here as promised is the second part of our exhaustive, bobble hatted guide to *SSX*. This issue, we're giving you maps to the first three courses complete with locations of all the short cuts dotted around them.
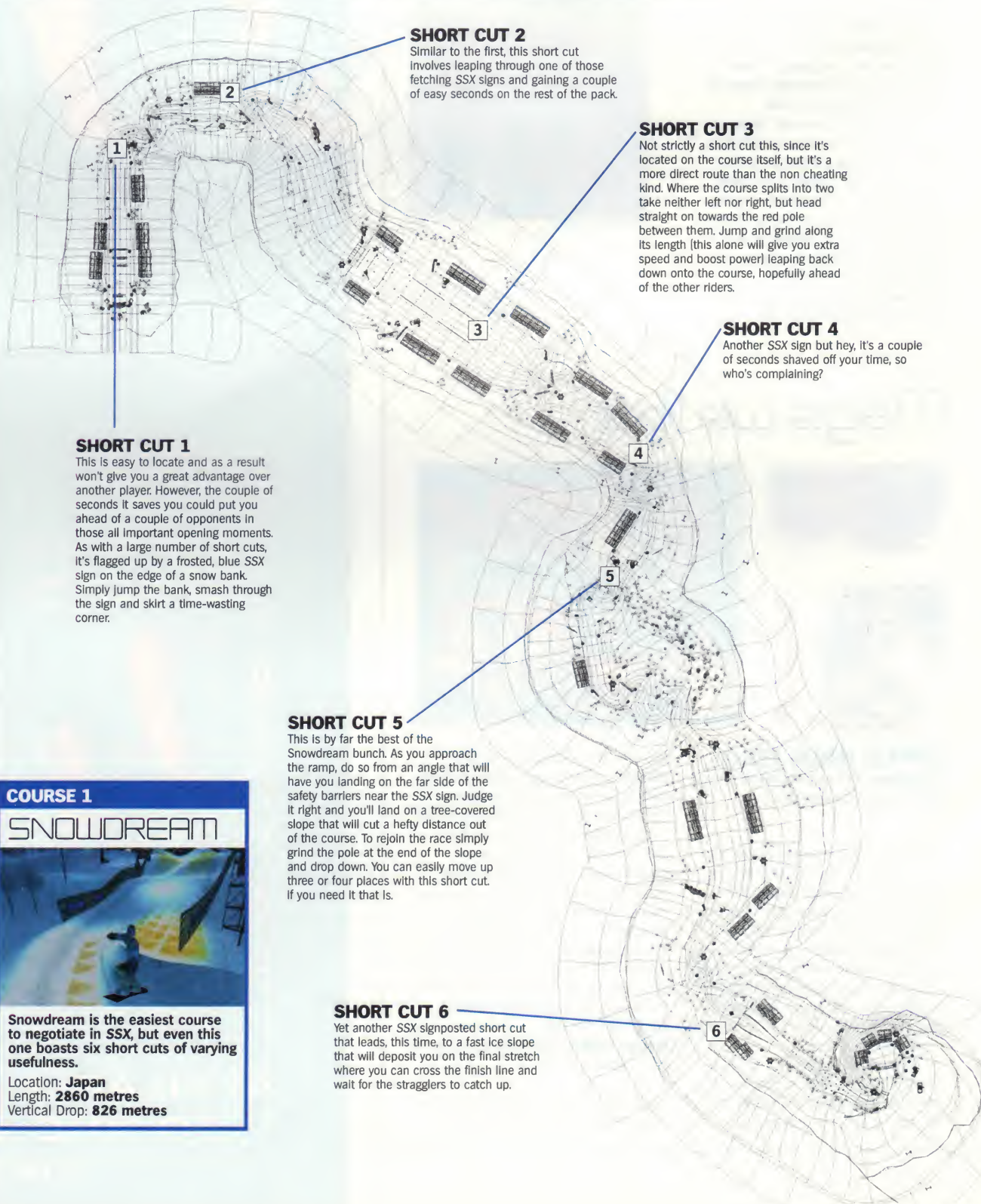
SHORT CUT 2
Similar to the first, this short cut involves leaping through one of those fetching *SSX* signs and gaining a couple of easy seconds on the rest of the pack.

SHORT CUT 3
Not strictly a short cut this, since it's located on the course itself, but it's a more direct route than the non cheating kind. Where the course splits into two take neither left nor right, but head straight on towards the red pole between them. Jump and grind along its length (this alone will give you extra speed and boost power) leaping back down onto the course, hopefully ahead of the other riders.

SHORT CUT 4
Another *SSX* sign but hey, it's a couple of seconds shaved off your time, so who's complaining?

SHORT CUT 1
This is easy to locate and as a result won't give you a great advantage over another player. However, the couple of seconds it saves you could put you ahead of a couple of opponents in those all important opening moments. As with a large number of short cuts, it's flagged up by a frosted, blue *SSX* sign on the edge of a snow bank. Simply jump the bank, smash through the sign and skirt a time-wasting corner.

SHORT CUT 5
This is by far the best of the Snowdream bunch. As you approach the ramp, do so from an angle that will have you landing on the far side of the safety barriers near the *SSX* sign. Judge it right and you'll land on a tree-covered slope that will cut a hefty distance out of the course. To rejoin the race simply grind the pole at the end of the slope and drop down. You can easily move up three or four places with this short cut. If you need it that is.

COURSE 1
SNOWDREAM

Snowdream is the easiest course to negotiate in *SSX*, but even this one boasts six short cuts of varying usefulness.

Location: **Japan**
Length: **2860 metres**
Vertical Drop: **826 metres**

SHORT CUT 6
Yet another *SSX* signposted short cut that leads, this time, to a fast ice slope that will deposit you on the final stretch where you can cross the finish line and wait for the stragglers to catch up.

COURSES AND SHORT CUTS

SHORT CUT 2
This is hidden beyond two *SSX* signs above the left bank of a right-hand turn. If you take this short cut then there's another just beyond it on a similar bank by some yellow signs. Be careful though. This second part hides some deep powder which will slow you down if you're not careful.

SHORT CUT 3
This one works on the same way as its Snowdream numbersake. Grind as many of the pipes as you can and you'll really pick up the pace, outstripping those riders who have opted for the ramp route below.

SHORT CUT 1
This one appears not long after the start of the course, just beyond the first checkpoint that appears by a red ramp. As soon as you land, veer right and you'll climb a narrow slope up to a fenced off area with a 'closed' warning sign. Just keep on going, smash through the barrier and jump over the gaps. Worth doing, but like we said, not really a way to increase your lead.

SHORT CUT 4
Number four is found straight after the pipe-fest above. It's another *SSX* sign-posted affair that leads you to through yet more nature, cutting off a slice of course.

SHORT CUT 5
This is basically a series of cliff jumps that will save you a considerable amount of time if you can hop from one to the next and avoid the drops between. One one of the sections is an *SSX* sign that announces an additional short cut to the next section jump.

COURSE 2

ELYSIUM ALPS

This course is the first to give you a short cut which, although pretty, doesn't actually save you much time (Number 1).

Location: **France**
Length: **6899 metres**
Vertical Drop: **2505 metres**

SHORT CUT 1
After the first couple of turns you'll see a ramp to the left leading up to an SSX sign. Take the ramp with a jump and you'll fly over a gap to an obstacle free, snowy slip-road that joins onto the course ahead of your opponents.

SHORT CUT 2
This is another SSX sign, on the right this time by a small cluster of parked cars. Jump the bank and crash through the sign to reveal another pristine mini run.

SHORT CUT 3
You'll have to be quick to get this one. Immediately after you rejoin the course, it splits. Keep going straight ahead and grind the pipe that rises above the course. Perform a forward flip at the end of this and you'll enter the building that splits the regular course below. After a brief spot of interior boarding jump out the other side of the building and if you have enough height you'll clear the fence ahead, enabling you to rejoin the course at the end of the alleyway.

SHORT CUT 4
If you miss number three, you can always take this short cut by leaping the bank to the right of the bus, half buried in the snow drift. And yes, those are SSX signs beyond it.

SHORT CUT 5
This one is for mentalists with good reactions. It's also quite long so listen up. Soon you'll see a multistorey garage to your right with a handy gap in the fencing. Enter the garage, powering up a jump to clear the gap to the next roof top. Jump another gap between buildings and then grind either of the narrow poles. This will take you through the building ahead depositing you in front of giant doughnut sign with a pole going through the middle. Grind this and speed through the next building. As soon as you exit this, veer to the left and perform another giant doughnut grind that will take you to the end of the short cut. Piece of cake. Sort of.

SHORT CUT 6
If that's too rich for your blood you can still shave some time off your run with this short cut. It's on the right of the course and is marked by a double SSX sign located just beyond a red ramp.

SHORT CUT 7
Number seven cuts a hefty chunk out of the course if you can pull it off. Just after the last short cut you'll see a SSX sign flanked by towers, on the side of a building. Grind the pole that leads up to it, leaping through at the last moment and get some serious air time by grinding the airships on the other side!

SHORT CUT 8
Providing you've still got your lunch after that you'll enter a section of the run that takes you through the park. The regular route is quite twisty and can take the edge off your speed. Mercifully, there are two fast ways past this. The first involves veering and keeping to the right as soon as you enter the park. You have to dodge a few trees but it's a sight better than taking the winding path.

SHORT CUT 10
It's far too easy to miss this one but fun to find. Stay on the lower level of the damaged freeway section all the way to the very end. Here you'll find a steep, grey ramp, the far side of which hides another tunnel entrance. Take this and you'll find yourself hurtling towards the subway tracks and the trains speeding along it. Time it right and cross the tracks between trains and continue along the next tunnel avoiding the blades of the huge fan blades dotted along its length. When the route splits, take the right fork and you'll end up nicely positioned for the final stretch of the course.

SHORT CUT 11
If you choose not to play with the subway trains you can make some time with this last short cut. After the damaged freeway section you'll see a can't-possibly-be-a-coincidence SSX sign in a narrow space between buildings to your left. Break through this and position yourself quickly to grind the pole that leads from and over the huge drop that presents itself in front of you. Leap from this pole down to the red marked area below and jump the ramp to end up on that all important final stretch of track.

SHORT CUT 9
Once you're in the park jump the bank through the SSX sign to your left and get onto the frozen river. Soon enough your pathway appears to be blocked by a bricked up tunnel entrance. Keep going, smash through this and you'll find yourself in an underground tunnel. Use the banks of the tunnel to clear the half pipe barriers and you'll exit beneath the damaged freeway flyover.

TIMESPLITTERS

'That' Cyberden 2005 problem solved.

We've had a number of puzzled enquiries from people who have had problems completing the Cyberden 2005 level on Normal setting, coming up against a locked door [1]. Here's what you need to do. In the room where you find the chip necessary to complete the level [2] you will find a switch on the wall directly behind it [3]. Activate the switch with ⊗ [4] and then exit the room bearing right along the curved corridor. The formerly closed door will now be an open one [5].

How do I get through here?
15 | 86

Find the room with the chip in...
15 | 86

...and locate the switch behind it.
14 | 0

Activate it with the ⊗ button.
14 | 0

And you'll find the door open.
↑ 15

RAYMAN REVOLUTION

Direct access to the multiplayer bonus maps.

New maps
Go to the Options menu in the first map and select the Raymanian language from Voices. Before you validate the choice, keep ▣ and ▣ pressed and enter the following code: ▣,▣,▣,▣,▣ whereupon a new menu will appear with three spangly new multiplayer bonus maps on it.

Other cheats
In any other map, go to the Sound menu, select the 'MUTE' option (again don't validate it). Keep ▣ and ▣ pressed and repeat the code from above (that is ▣,▣,▣,▣,▣). A new cheat menu will be your reward.

Cheat for Baby Soccer bonus map.
During a match repeat the now familiar code sequence and you'll find that the players' names now appear on the baby globox. Ahhhh.

THEME PARK WORLD

Roll up roll up! With but a few choice key presses will you be able to do amazing things! Enter these codes whilst in Camcorder mode and thrill at your ridiculous good fortune.

Free purchases
Enter the following code string eight times: ←,↓,⊗,◎

Golden ticket bonanza
Enter the following code string four times:
↑,↓,←,→,◎,→,←,↓,↑,◎

All items in park researched
Enter the following code string eight times: ↑,↓,↑,↓,←,↑,↓,↑

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

How to bend the rules of wholesale carnage and generally make sure the blood on the walls isn't your own.

Skip A Level
Press ▶ to pause gameplay, then press ↑,↓,←,→,→,←,◎.

Select A Level
Save the game and return to the main menu. From here select the 'Resume Game' option, then highlight the previously saved game and press ↑,↓x2,↑,←,↑,→,↓.

Invincibility
Press ▶ to pause the game, then press ◎,◎,←,→,◎,◎.

All Ammunition
Press ▶ to pause the game, then press ←,→,◎x3,→,←.

Muchas Mutators
Mutators are fun, and *Unreal* gives you quite a few as standard enabling all manner of tweakable game shenanigans. There are however, a few extra mutators to unlock. All of the following should be entered at the main menu.

Fatboy Mutator
Press ◎x3,↑,↓x2,↑,◎x3. Select multiplayer mode and choose the freshly opened Fatboy Mutator. Hereafter your character will get fatter with each frag you score, and thinner with each one scored against you. Very funny.

Stealth Mutator
Press ◎x2,◎x2,◎x2,◎x2. Select Multiplayer mode and choose Stealth Mutator. Now all combatants will be equipped with cloaking devices that make them virtually invisible.

Big Head Mutator
Simply press ←,→,←,→,←,→,◎x3. Then enter the Multiplayer mode and select the newly unlocked mutator. This will give the players big heads.

SUMMONER

"Where are the Cheetos?" Access *Summoner*'s cool, hidden FMV sequence.

Hidden FMV
Secreted away in the credits of *Summoner* is a hilarious spoof of the game which has game characters sitting around playing *Dungeons & Dragons*. It's well worth checking out and living proof that RPG fans *do* have a sense of humour. To reach it, select Credits from the Menu and then press ⊗.

Accelerated magic
Here's a sneaky corner cutting exercise to create magic without having to wait. Simply cast a spell, then press ▲ to bring up the pause menu. Select the Skills option from here, then exit to resume the game. Your spell will be cast without any delay.

Reduce Ability Point loss during long Chain Attacks
Another sly one. Perform a Chain Attack with four or more parts, then press ▣,▣ (or the same buttons in reverse) quickly to switch to another character and then back to the first. If successful your chain number will return to one and you can continue to attack without having to slowdown.

DVD SPECIAL

Q&A

Since the UK launch of the PS2 we at *OPS2* have been inundated with queries, problems, solutions, opinions and advice on the subject of PlayStation 2 and DVD. It would be impossible to answer them all individually so instead we have compiled all the most regularly asked questions (and a few not so regular) and put them to the Manager of SCEE's technology group Mike Kavallierou. Here are his responses. Let us know what you think.

If you're having problems with green screens (as the above story from *OPS2* issue #03), it will have something to do with your leads.

1. SCREEN RATIO SETTINGS

People who don't have widescreen TVs have been unable to adjust the screen ratio setting for DVD playback to 4:3 despite following the manual and the option being available on the Screen Size sub-menu. What could they be doing wrong?

In order to change the aspect ratio whilst playing DVD movies the PS2 needs to have a DVD movie inserted and booted. The aspect ratio control in the DVD setup menu will only operate if the movie itself is actually stopped (not just paused). The aspect ratio cannot be changed while the movie is playing. It should be noted however that correct aspect ratios can only be delivered if the software (DVD movie) itself supports that function – this is just as with every controllable function any DVD player offers – the control will only work properly/at all if the software supports that function.

2. DVD NON-COMPATIBILITY

Why is that a number of PAL DVDs (from *Wallace and Gromit* to *The World Is Not Enough*) will not play on the PS2 when all indications are that they should?

This phenomenon is not, of course, exclusive to PS2. It can vary from title to title and from player to player. Fundamentally the issue lies within the disc software and how it has been mastered. DVD specifications which were developed and agreed on a few years ago are open to interpretation and, in some cases, the way in which a player's operational software has been designed and the way it interacts with the DVD movie software presented to it can cause various problems – anything from not booting to audio sync not working correctly. In nearly every case of this kind it has proven that remastering of the movie software could resolve the problem with particular players. Mastering houses are working hard to ensure that their titles are tested on all the major brands of players before disc manufacture. SCEE have provided PS2s for testing purposes to all of the major European Publishers/testing houses for this purpose.

3. LIP-SYNC PROBLEMS

Is there any permanent way to stop the problem people are experiencing with out of sync sound during DVD playback? (Aside from the quick fix of constantly pausing and resuming playback).

See question 2. Should this phenomenon arise there is, unfortunately, no way to stop this. The audio and video timing circuits within PS2 are well within specification – it is an issue of how the DVD movie has been mastered. We should see this occurring less and less with new releases as most major publishing houses now have PS2's to test with as well as other major player brands.

4. AUDIO LEVEL ADJUSTMENTS

Despite the manual stating that it is possible, some PS2 owners have found it impossible to adjust the DVD audio level up to the +2 and +4 settings. Has this option been locked off in UK PlayStation 2s?

No, nothing is 'locked off'. It is only possible to adjust the volume level if the Digital Optical Out option (which sits at the top of this menu) is switched off. This is a sensible design feature. In the cases where it can't adjust, this is because the consumer is trying to do it with all features switched on.

5. SCART/S-VIDEO LEAD SWAPS

Is there any way around having to swap the SCART lead (used for optimum game playback) and the S-Video or other choice of lead for when you want DVD playback?

No, the Euro AV cable which delivers RGB directly to the TV SCART socket has to have copy protection within the RGB signals during DVD movie playback. (This is an International directive.) S-Video offers the best all-round video output on PS2, (provided the consumers' TV accepts S-Video). Also any video quality difference between S-Video and RGB can only be detected on very high-spec TV's/Monitors – in most cases, with most TVs there is no discernable difference between these two high quality video delivery standards.

6. GREEN SCREEN GAMES

Will games produced on DVD have the 'green screen' problem that DVD films have when played with a SCART lead connected? A lot of games are coming on DVD in the future.

No, There are already a few game titles published on DVD-ROM (Fantavision) and the video playback is fine. The differentiator is whether the disc is a DVD-Video (movie) or DVD-ROM (game). DVD Video is the only media type which provides copy protection with RGB.

7. NTSC REGION 2 DVD VIEWING

Will UK PAL PS2s only play PAL Region 2 DVDs or will they play NTSC Region 2 DVDs? A definitive answer on this would be great.

From what we have seen, NTSC Region 2 DVDs will play again, how the disc is mastered plays a part in the final playability – again, it can vary from title to title.

8. DVD VIRUS DANGER

Since the DVD software is upgradeable is there any potential danger from viruses or is this not an issue with EPROM?

Theoretically a DVD player 'virus' could be written and saved to the Memory Card – which is the upgrade medium. The ROM containing the original DVD player software cannot be accessed or altered, though.

9. BLACK BAND APPEARANCE

A reader has found that on starting up the PlayStation2 that a half-inch, vertical black band appears on the right of the screen which only disappears when he plays DVDs. He's tried using different TV sets and connecting leads but the trouble seems to persist. Have you heard of this sort of problem before and if so, do you have any solutions?

If you watch DVDs on your PS2 through S-Video leads, rather than RGB SCART you won't get a green screen.

The Memory Card will be utilised for future DVD driver updates.

//The issue lies with how the disc has been mastered. Resmastering DVDs will resolve all playback problems//

We have not heard of this before. We would need to know the specific TV make/model so we can try to emulate and resolve the problem. We are happy to provide this level of service for any consumer. A call to SCEEs customer Careline on 08705 998877 which would be passed through to second level Technical Support would initiate the specific support required.

11. DVD DRIVER DIFFERENCES

What are the differences between the Japanese PS2's V2.01 DVD driver software and our V1.20E? Do the Japanese get any more functionality from their DVD player, and if so will there be a new version released for UK PS2 owners soon?

The main difference is that V2.01 supports Japan's soon-to-be-released DVD player remote control. Current models with V1.20E will be able to support the remote control with a software upgrade stored to a Memory Card.

13. DUAL LAYER DVD HANDLING

How are you finding the PS2 DVD player is coping with the transition between layers of dual layer DVDs?

Fine. In some cases a small delay in changing of chapters can be seen at the point of transition, but certainly no more so than with any other player.

14. NON PS2 DVDS

Is there a definitive list of DVDs that don't work on the PlayStation 2?

No, this has not been necessary.

15. EPROM UPGRADES

When DVD driver upgrades become available in the future, how will you go about reprogramming the EPROM? Will the owner be able to do it or will you need to get a technician to do it?

See question eight. The media that is required to carry the upgrade is the Memory Card, not any internal component.

18. CARELINE HOLD UPS

A considerable number of readers have had a rough time trying to get answers about SCEE through their Careline phone number, being put on hold for over an hour. Is there any chance more people will be drafted in to help answer phone enquiries?

This is already an issue committed to the history books. Just after Christmas we were inundated with calls due to the extraordinary level of interest created by PS2 which caught us by surprise despite best efforts to forecast the call volumes. Within a few days SCEE made more lines and agents available and set up a call overflow provision at second level Technical Support which then competently coped with the extra temporary demand. Since that time we have taken on and trained more staff to deal with the increased call volumes on an ongoing basis. The service levels delivered during the short period in question was way under our own high standards. We took the temporary drop in standards very seriously and reacted immediately, resolving the problem within days.

20. MULTI-REGION POSSIBLITIES

Would SCE ever consider installing a multi-region DVD player in the PS2?

Region coding is a requirement of internationally imposed regulation and, as is the case with any responsible manufacturer, SCE adheres

completely to the requirements. As such there are no plans to make PlayStation 2 multi-region. This could only change should there be a general relaxing of the region coding regulations worldwide.

21. NON COMPATIBLE DVDS

Is there any way to tell which DVDs will not play on the PlayStation 2 player or is it a matter of trial and error?

The current list of non-compatible DVDs is very small, and this will become even less, due to our ongoing effort to make sure that all DVD manufacturing and mastering houses are supplied with PS2s to test films on.

22. DVD REMOTE CONTROL

Will PS2s in the UK start to be sold with the DVD remote as they are now in Japan, and if so, what will trigger that decision?

There are no plans at present to do this.
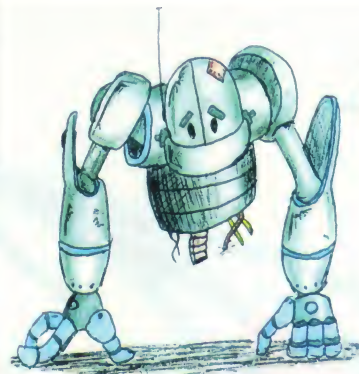
23. S-VIDEO LEAD AVAILABILITY

Some readers are having problems getting hold of a PS2 S-Video lead. Are they widely available? Who should people get in touch with at SCEE to buy direct from you?

We only received a limited supply of PS2 S-Video leads, most of which were supplied to specialist retailers. We're currently trying to replenish stocks as quickly as possible.

*For all technical PS2 enquiries, call SCEE's customer Careline on 08705 998877. For all other PS2-related questions and problems (and our answers), write to Paul Fitzpatrick at: HardCore Q&A, *Official PlayStation2 Magazine*, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW, or email us on: PS2@futurenet.co.uk. Keep those mails coming.

WHO ASKED THE QUESTIONS?

Thanks to the following people, and keep those questions coming...

David Lambert, via email
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Dave Robson, via email
G Middlemass, Milton Keynes
Scott Turner, via email
Simon Byrne, via email
Andrew Thompson, via email
Darren Davies, Exeter
Simon Patch, Carringham
Jonathan Fisk, Bradford
Daniel Jackson, Worcester
Dominic Palmer, via email
Scott Fielding, via email
Simon Williams, via email
David Lambert, via email
Loz, via email
Mike Gurden, via email
Matthew Bolton, via email
Andrew Perkins, via email
Andrew Swann, via email
André Geerdink, The Netherlands
Craig Steed, via email
Paul Dossis, via email
Richard Faulds, Emsworth
David So, via email
And to all those anonymous readers who phoned the *OPS2* office...

PlayStation 2
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK

PAL

HANZ 'N' FEET

Hanz: Takes charge of the more technical moves.

Feet: Does the more physical work, like running.
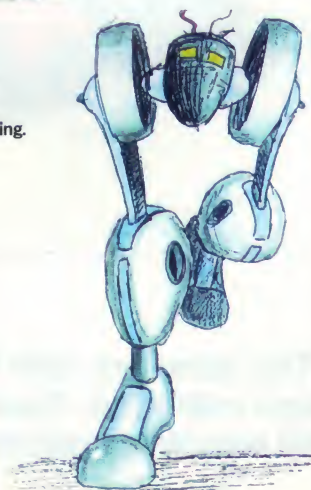
Lord Slugley: The evil slave driver.

Designer Genes

Got an idea for a game? Then let us know about it. This month's Designer Genes features a dismembered robot's quest to save a damsel in distress at the top of a tower.

#5: HANZ 'N' FEET/DESIGNED BY: KARL JONES, LIVERPOOL

"On an alien planet a humanoid robot called Hanz is a slave to a horrible alien named Lord Slugly who lives at the top of a huge tower with many floors. Hanz plans one day to leave and live on Chiptom, the planet of the robots where he'll be free from slavery. But Hanz falls in love with a female robot called Tootz who is also a slave for for evil tyrant Slugly.

"One day when Hanz is operating some machinery he's accidentally cut in two and his heartless master has him thrown on to a huge rubbish tip. Your mission then begins to get from the tip to the top of the tower and rescue Tootz from the evil master then escape to Chiptom. At first you just control the top half of Hanz (the bit with the brain)

and find a microchip to bring your lower half to life so that it can assist you in your quest. The chip will make this lower half into a robot in his own right and is called Feet. Hanz has the ability to operate machinery and weaponry, swing on ropes, use monkey bars and climb. He can walk on his hands but he is slow. Feet however can run, kick and jump.

"Hanz can climb on top of Feet and so the pair can move quickly (handy during chases). Ascending the tower is hazardous with many of Slugly's henchmen to sneak past, kill and outwit. Here an element of stealth is necessary. Our two heroes must use their different skills effectively in order to reach the top of the tower, rescue the love of his/their life and get to Chiptom to regain their freedom."

THE EXPERT'S OPINION

CHARLES CECIL
MD of PS2 developer Revolution.

The story has some nice ideas – a sort of cross between *Antz* and *Short Circuit*. There is enormous gameplay to be had from controlling various characters with different attributes. I imagine the game containing timing puzzles whereby the player would have to quickly switch between the two characters getting each to perform an action which allowed the other to progress. To be contemporary, the game should probably be 3D. Study *Mario 64* which evolved the arcade game from 2D to 3D. The next stage would be to create a level map showing the puzzles you imagine and how they work. This design has great potential.

Camping village
082m

OPS2ometer

What's hot, what's not, what's out there...

FEVER

Sega dumping Dreamcast and deciding to bring its great games to PS2 instead. Bring on **Crazy Taxi** and **Space Channel 5**.

The **GT3: A-Spec** demo. It's a world exclusive and you won't get to play the game anywhere else.

The **OPS2 five-a-side team** tonking PC Format 25-2. That's *twenty-five*.

Sam plonked in a photography studio and watching four lovelies practice **high kicks** just for him.

Ace new PS2 games that aren't based on old PSone or PC games. Thank you **Project Eden**, **G-Surfers** and **Star Wars: Starfighter**.

Nice cake ladies send us.

CHILL

Games slipping down the release schedule. Now we have to wait even longer for **GT3** and **Project Eden**.

The Fitz legging off to New York without telling anyone and leave nothing but a **big inflatable pumpkin** in his place. Come to think of it, it is quieter around here…

The end of **Bath City's** Dr Martins' League championship challenge.

That woman who said she was going to move into **Sefton's flat** and then changed her mind at the last minute, leaving him up a certain creek.
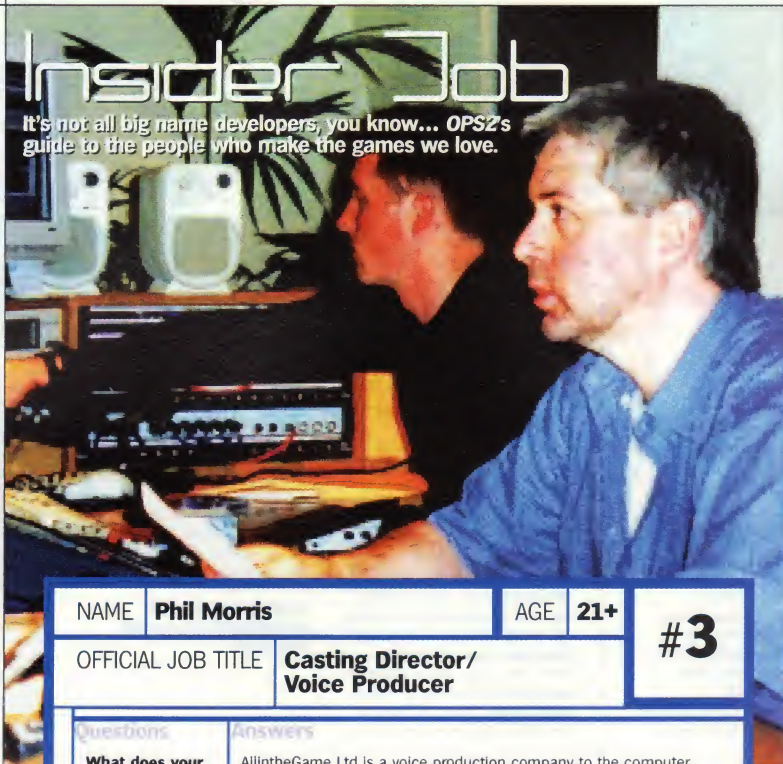
The people who run arcades being total **cowboys** – according to Sam.

Eternal Ring.

Insider Job

It's not all big name developers, you know… OPS2's guide to the people who make the games we love.

NAME	**Phil Morris**	AGE **21+**	**#3**
OFFICIAL JOB TITLE	**Casting Director/ Voice Producer**		

Questions	Answers
What does your job involve?	AllintheGame Ltd is a voice production company to the computer games industry. We cast professional actors and singers in different languages from a cast of over a thousand radio, TV and movie performers for game voiceovers, and then produce them.
What games have you worked on?	Most recently: *Hitman* (Eidos), *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire* (Eidos), *MTV Music Generator* (Codemasters) and *Shadowman 2* (Acclaim).
What was your first job?	My first job was Production Assistant for a big Manchester advertising agency, learning all about print and production.
How did you get started with recording voices for games?	I ran English Software Company in Manchester in the Eighties, producing titles such as *Elektraglide*, *Atari Smash Hits*, *Jet-Boot Jack*. I then became Music Manager for Psygnosis from 1992-98, producing music, sound effects and voices for most of the external projects, including all the Murray Walker recordings for the SCEE F1 series.
What factors got you involved with games?	Playing and retailing games on TV games consoles and then on Atari computers led to a natural evolution into game design and publishing. My favourite games of the time have to be *Miner '49er*, *Nautilus* and *Shamus* – very playable Atari 8 bit games which were unpretentious and pure fun!
Who are your heroes?	Lee Evans, who I think is the most inventive stand-up comedian in the UK and Dustin Hoffman for being one of the most original US actors. Jimi Hendrix for defining the rock guitar and Bill Gates for the home computer and turning the PC into the world standard.
Who's made the best videogame voices and sound?	I like a lot of the US Microsoft games – *Crimson Skies* comes to mind as having a really interesting story line, a good script and convincing character performances.
What do you look at for influence?	Actors such as the husky Redd Pepper who played *Shadowman* and *Blade*, plus Kerry Shale who's appeared in numerous games including *Tomb Raider: Chronicles*. We loved working with Antonio Fargas (Huggy Bear from *Starsky & Hutch*) on *Driver 2* – he was a real cool guy.
What do you think of the standard of scripts and voice acting in games?	Extremely good overall. With the odd exception, it is now really matching the quality of radio and TV drama, if the scripts are well rehearsed and prepared by the actors.
How do you get a good performance from an actor?	Ensure that they have plenty of time to prepare, and also ensure that they are very experienced in all aspects of voice work.
What work are you proud of?	The range of voices in *Imperium Galactica 2*, and of course, working with Chris Tarrant on *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire*.
What's the best part of your job?	Moulding the entire voice content of so many games, and meeting great talent in the London recording studios.
How will your job change with the advent of PS2?	I hope the scope for bigger and better scripts will produce even more drama in the games we work on.

You Got It Wrong, Son!

Do you think we've unfairly reviewed a game? Think you know better than us? Then tell us about it here.

Rion Bailey, Leeds

"What rubbish! How can you give *Moto GP* a score of seven when all the bikers ride round without an ounce of AI between them? When I had a go it was obvious where the other riders were all going as they drove in a set pattern. When I did try and overtake I ended up in the gravel or sliding across the ground. How are you supposed to play it when you can't overtake properly without falling over? Me and my friend thought that was stupid.

"The bikes are all the same too. Just because they are different colours doesn't mean they handle any better and when you finally get it on the courses (there aren't enough of them either). You never get a chance to appreciate them either because you're always falling off. Namco has made this game too hard to be fun and I can't believe I bought it. I thought it was going to be arcade-quality stuff but all I've got is a headache and sore thumbs".

Graphics **04**/Sound **06**/ Gameplay **02**/Life span **04**/ **Overall 04**

MOTO GP

MOTO GP
The best racing game on the PS2 so far? Some of you were excited about the bike challenge, other readers it seems have different opinions...

Francis Kohler, Newcastle

"Cowardice is not an attractive trait. Neither is fence sitting. But that's exactly what you did when you gave the (in my opinion) underestimated *Moto GP* a seven instead of the nine it deserves. Think about it. If a game with *GP*'s pedigree was released with four-wheeled vehicles as the focus of the action you wouldn't have hesitated to give it a higher score. As an arcade game it is the tops. But it's as a racing bike simulator that it really wins.

"Unlike a lot of other racing games you really have to watch the map and take each circuit strategically. There aren't many racers that force you to use your brain so *Moto GP* should get credit for that. Last of all I must mention the superb graphics. I doubt *Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec* will have replays that are better than *Moto GP*'s. Controversial, but it will take something like that to get you car-loving lot to wake up and see that you didn't do this game justice."

Graphics **09**/Sound **08**/ Gameplay **09**/Life span **09**/ **Overall 09**

Brainstorm

164 pages of PS2 in handy blipvert form... Follow the page numbers to see what you've missed.

"And the Isle Of Man enters the arms race" p.30

"Michael Jackson popped up looking like a sun-dried twig" p.146

"Put your nose to the page" p.44

"*WinBack* is not a game about jazz musicians" p.28

"A fresh turd under a pile of leaves" p.114

"You could always use the telescopic capability for voyeuristic means and look at naked ladies with it" p.56

"Warning: This paradox will screw up your brains" p.110

"An exceptionally small appendage" p.54

"They're too busy messing up their beds in their inside-out houses full of dissected cows to play games consoles" p.66

"Germans drink beer for breakfast" p.53

"It's like convincing an elderly relative to take you on at *Tekken* only to have your lovingly cultivated combos thwarted by their insistence on hammering the buttons at random" p.100

"On the surface you could be fooled into thinking European life is somewhat tedious" p.108

"Ultimately you can only make progression by getting your ass burned off" p.110

"Neutralise the Syndicate goons" p.104

"Those who couldn't care less about basketball might at least recognise Shaquille O'Neal as the genie from *Kazaam*" p.119

"Just look at these two! Just look at these two going at it! Just look at these two - toe to toe. Just look at these two!" p.103

"Only the regular on-rink brawls make it worth the ticket price" p.111

ILLUSTRATION: MR JAGO

The Quiz

Time to sharpen your brains on the axe that is the *Official PlayStation 2 Magazine* Quiz. Are you an otaku or an uvavu?

Database

Want to know more? Need to know a release date? What about a game in the future? Something gone wrong? Here's all the info you could ever need…

NICE AND EASY

1. What two famous boxers won't appear in *Knockout Kings 2001*.

2. Japanese correspondent Amos Wong wants to work for what shop?

3. What was the name of *MTV Music Generator*'s creator, Tim Wright's pub band?

4. Konami's *7 Blades* based on which film?

5. What Luc Besson film inspired the developers of *Oni*.

ACRONYMS
What do the following abbreviations stand for.

1. SCE
2. ESPN
3. SCART
4. USB
5. FIFA

FITZ'S ONI QUIZ
He's been playing it all month so now he's testing your knowledge.

1. What does 'Oni' mean?

2. The character Shinatama is an SLD. What's that?

3. Where is developer Bungie Software based?

4. What is special about the opening sequence?

5. Who or what in the game is 'Muro'?

WE ARE FAMILY
Test yourself on knowledge of famous videogame dynasties.

1. Name the zombie-killing brother and sister act in the forthcoming *Resident Evil Code: Veronica X* game.

2. Which relative of *Dead Or Alive 2*'s Tina Armstrong also appears in the game?

3. In *Super Bust-A-Move*, how is Bub related to Bob?

4. Name Solid Snake's dad.

5. In the *Street Fighter* games, name Ryu's American counterpart.

MOVIE WATCH
Get cerebral with the celluloid.

1. Who directed *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*?

2. And before *Crouching Tiger*, what was Michelle Yeoh's biggest English-language movie part?

3. Adam Sandler is a failed ice hockey pro who turns to golf. The film?

4. Who played the two leads in *Out Of Sight*?

5. In what film does Billy Crystal cameo as a miming waiter?

MOVIE WATCH 2
Which of the following movies have enjoyed videogame tie-ins?

1. *Evil Dead*
2. *Se7en*
3. *E.T.*
4. *Blade Runner*
5. *Uncle Buck*

SAM'S KONAMI QUIZ STRIKES BACK
We name the game, you name the Konami studio. Look, you don't have to work with him…

1. *Metal Gear Solid 2*
2. *Guitar Freaks*
3. *Silent Scope*
4. *ESPN NBA 2Night*
5. *Exciting Bass 3*

DRAGON TEAR HUMAN
We've mixed up the letters of game names to make rude-sounding new phrases. You've guessed it, it's the anagram round.

1. Congo Skunk Kit
2. Red Jet Ponce
3. Collagen Hustle
4. Lisa Fat Fanny
5. Wet Gay Heat

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE
If you know these, you're either working on this magazine – so stop cheating – or you have too much time on your hands.

1. In the *Legacy Of Kain* legend, who is the guardian of the pillar of time?

2. Freedom Brock is the character. What's the game?

3. GTA3 developers DMA Design are based in Leith, Edinburgh. But where did they used to live?

4. Name *The Bouncer*'s character designer.

5. In which year was coin-op classic *Battlezone* released?

ANSWERS
[USE A MIRROR]

Nice and Easy
1. Hamed and Tyson
2. Amo's Style
3. Infinite Remix Of The Third Junior
4. Legend of Zipang
5. La Femme Nikita

Acronyms
1. Sony Computer Entertainment
2. Entertainment and Sports Programming Network
3. Syndicat des Constructeurs d'Appareils Radiorécepteurs et Téléviseurs
4. Universal Serial Bus
5. Federation of International Football Associations

Fitz's Oni Quiz
1. Ghost or Demon in Japanese
2. Simulated Life Doll, or Android
3. Chicago
4. It was made by the people behind anime classic Akira
5. Boss of the Syndicate, the game's bad guys

We Are Family
1. Claire and Chris Redfield
2. Bass Armstrong, her daddy
3. They're brothers
4. Big Boss
5. Ken

Movie Watch
1. Ang Lee
2. Colonel Wai-Lin in Tomorrow Never Dies
3. Happy Gilmore
4. Jennifer Lopez and George Clooney
5. This is Spinal Tap

Movie Watch 2
1, 3 and 4.

Sam's Konami Quiz
1. KCEJ (West)
2. KCEJ (West)
3. KCE Studios
4. KCEO
5. KCEN

Dragon Tear Human
1. Knockout Kings
2. Project Eden
3. Lotus Challenge
4. Final Fantasy
5. The Getaway

Mission Impossible
1. Moebius
2. Ready 2 Rumble: Round 2
3. Dundee
4. Tetsuya Nomura
5. 1980

SPOT THE BALL

YOUR RATING

35-46 Title winners

25-35 European place

15-25 Mid-table

0-15 Hello, Nationwide…

The Shortlist

If it's for PS2, and on sale in the UK then we've played it, argued about it and played it some more. Our potted judgements begin below.

Clockwise from top: Kessen, Unreal Tournament, Donald Duck: Quack Attack, Summoner and Armored Core 2.

Name: Boris

AQUA AQUA: WETRIX 2.0
☐ Publisher: **SCi**
☐ Developer: **Zed Two**
Addictive, well-realised take on the familiar *Wetrix* puzzle game formula. Build up landscapes and fill them with the water that falls from the sky.
Reviewed **Issue #01**
Players **1-4**
Graphics **06**/Sound **07**
Gameplay **08**/Life span **07**
Overall 07

ARMORED CORE 2
☐ Publisher: **Ubi Soft**
☐ Developer: **From Software**
Enjoyable first-person shooter offering the devoted mech head a multitude of interchangeable and customisable robo-body parts.
Reviewed **Issue #04**
Players **1-2**
Graphics **07**/Sound **06**
Gameplay **07**/Life span **07**
Overall 07

DEAD OR ALIVE 2
☐ Publisher: **SCEE**
☐ Developer: **Tecmo**
Graphically superior to *Tekken* and with a more strategy-based gameplay. *DOA2*'s appeal lies in its open arenas and blistering frame rate. Sadly, a lack of characters and newbie-unfriendly gameplay will keep *DOA2* a cult hit.
Reviewed **Issue #02**
Players **1-4**
Graphics **08**/Sound **04**
Gameplay **08**/Life span **06**
Overall 07

DISNEY'S DINOSAUR
☐ Publisher: **Ubi Soft**
☐ Developer: **Ubi Soft**
A poor, and seemingly rushed spin-off of the movie of the same name. Even the kids will tire of this very quickly – don't inflict it on them, dad!
Reviewed **Issue #03**
Players **1**
Graphics **03**/Sound **05**
Gameplay **04**/Life span **03**
Overall 04

DONALD DUCK: QUACK ATTACK
☐ Publisher: **Ubi Soft**
☐ Developer: **Disney Interactive**
Whether you agreed with the politics of Disney, you can't deny his cartoons were often damn funny. This game on the other hand is far more 'cack' than 'quack'.
Reviewed **Issue #04**
Players **1**
Graphics **05**/Sound **06**
Gameplay **02**/Life span **03**
Overall 04

DRAGON'S LAIR
☐ Publisher: **Digital Leisure**
☐ Developer: **Cinematronics**
Only those who are nostalgic for the identical 17-year-old arcade title will want to play this, slow, unresponsive, and repetitive game with some seriously dated animation.
Reviewed **Issue #03**
Players **1**
Graphics **03**/Sound **02**
Gameplay **02**/Life span **01**
Overall 02

DRAGON'S LAIR II: TIMEWARP
☐ Publisher: **Digital Leisure**
☐ Developer: **Cinematronics**
A more painful gameplay experience than its predecessor, although the graphics are vastly improved. Still – this is a crime conversion to DVD and should have stayed on the LaserDisc from which it was converted.
Reviewed **Issue #03**
Players **1**
Graphics **03**/Sound **01**
Gameplay **01**/Life span **01**
Overall 01

DYNASTY WARRIORS 2
☐ Publisher: **Midas Interactive**
☐ Developer: **KOEI**
Dynasty Warriors 2 mixes strategy with sword-slashing, horse riding and shooting people with a bow and arrow, as you command armies across the rice fields of 3rd Century China. Slightly repetitive gameplay and some very questionable AI don't stop this game hinting at the future of PS2 gaming with its impressive battle scenes allowing up to 40 fighters on-screen at a time.
Reviewed **Issue #02**
Players **1**
Graphics **08**/Sound **08**
Gameplay **07**/Life span **06**
Overall 07

ESPN INTERNATIONAL TRACK & FIELD
☐ Publisher: **Konami**
☐ Developer: **KCEO**
Graphically impressive multi-part athletics sim built up of ten events including 100m, long jump, javelin, pole vault, hurdles, weightlifting trap shooting… and rhythmic gymnastics? (Actually the standout event.) Also one of the best PS2 multiplayer games. A simplistic and uninspiring control system spoil what might have been a right corker.
Reviewed **Issue #01**
Players **1-4**
Graphics **09**/Sound **07**
Gameplay **05**/Life span **04**
Overall 07

ESPN WINTER X-GAMES SNOWBOARDING
☐ Publisher: **Konami**
☐ Developer: **KCEO**
Overly realistic snowboarding sim, hampered by bland graphics, dull courses, and sedate, unresponsive controls. There's some depth to be found if you persevere though, and it does manage to provide a substantial one-player experience.
Reviewed **Issue #01**
Players **1-5**
Graphics **06**/Sound **05**
Gameplay **05**/Life span **07**
Overall 06

F1 CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON 2000
☐ Publisher: **EA Sports**
☐ Developer: **EA/Visual Sciences**
One of the first Formula One games to make it off the PS2 starting grid. It has good attention to detail but it offers nothing additional to previous incarnations. Its relatively easy control system will probably disappoint the racing game hardcore.
Reviewed **Issue #03**
Players **1-4** (22 in Time Trial)
Graphics **07**/Sound **05**
Gameplay **06**/Life span **06**
Overall 06

FANTAVISION
☐ Publisher: **SCEE**
☐ Developer: **SCEI**
An interesting oddity – the world's first fireworks game. Modest in size but highly original, *Fantavision* is a puzzler that encourages you to link chains of ascending fireworks then detonate them for a crowd pleasing effect. A game of random beauty.
Reviewed **Issue #01**
Players **1-2**
Graphics **08**/Sound **07**
Gameplay **08**/Life span **05**
Overall 07

FIFA 2001
☐ Publisher: **EA Sports**
☐ Developer: **EA Sports (Canada)**
The question remains: *ISS* or *FIFA*? This was the year when *FIFA* could have trounced its rival (*ISS* is based on the inferior N64 version not the PSone's *ISS Pro Evolution*.) Unfortunately, all the arguments against *FIFA* from previous incarnations still apply – all mouth, no trousers. Graphics score a hat trick but still second division gameplay.
Reviewed **Issue #02**
Players **1-4**
Graphics **10**/Sound **09**
Gameplay **05**/Life span **05**
Overall 07

GRADIUS III & IV
☐ Publisher: **Konami**
☐ Developer: **KCET**
Pointless reprise of 2D, side-scrolling spaceship shoot-'em-up from before the dawn of time. Or 1990, as we know it. Tedious, poorly ported and of minority interest only.
Reviewed **Issue #01**
Players **1-2**
Graphics **02**/Sound **03**
Gameplay **03**/Life span **02**
Overall 03

GUN GRIFFON BLAZE
☐ Publisher: **Swing**
☐ Developer: **GameArts**
Another mech game to satisfy robot fetishists everywhere. Although flawed, *GGB* is very entertaining and captures the imagination with considerable flair.
Reviewed **Issue #03**
Players **1**
Graphics **07**/Sound **06**
Gameplay **08**/Life span **06**
Overall 07

H30 SURFING
☐ Publisher: **Take 2**
☐ Developer: **ASCII**
A depressingly inadequate extreme sports sim. An infuriating camera angle fails to show all the fun you won't be having.
Reviewed **Issue #02**
Players **1-2**
Graphics **04**/Sound **04**
Gameplay **05**/Life span **04**
Overall 04

HOLOGRAM TIME TRAVELER
☐ Publisher: **Digital Leisure**
☐ Developer: **Sega**
The porting over of Eighties games continues with this sad affair that was never really popular when it first made an appearance in arcades. So why it's been released on a DVD now is anyone's guess.
Reviewed **Issue #03**
Players **1**
Graphics **00**/Sound **00**
Gameplay **01**/Life span **00**
Overall 00

INTERNATIONAL SUPERSTAR SOCCER
☐ Publisher: **Konami**
☐ Developer: **KCEO**
ISS on PS2 has added genuine squads (at last) and more instant gratification, but kept the clever AI and range of moves. Good, but not yet perfect. Just wait for 'proper' *ISS*...
Reviewed **Issue #01**
Players **1-4**
Graphics **07**/Sound **07**
Gameplay **08**/Life span **08**
Overall 08

KESSEN
☐ Publisher: **Electronic Arts**
☐ Developer: **KOEI**
A real-time strategy on a huge scale. Some staggering cut-scenes combined with more soldiers on screen than you can count make this entertaining fodder. Won't appeal to everyone though and a tad short.
Reviewed **Issue #04**
Players **1**
Graphics **08**/Sound **07**
Gameplay **07**/Life span **08**
Overall 07

MADDEN NFL 2001
☐ Publisher: **EA Sports**
☐ Developer: **EA Sports**
PS2's most accomplished sports game so far – extremely thorough, smoothly presented and highly rewarding to learn. That is if you like American football.
Reviewed: **Issue #01**
Players: **1-4**
Graphics **09**/Sound **08**
Gameplay **08**/Life span **09**
Overall 08

MIDNIGHT CLUB
☐ Publisher: **Rockstar**
☐ Developer: **Angel Studios**
Speedy urban racing game, boasting impressively huge NYC and London environments – but not much else. Arcade-like in a dated way and sadly forgettable.
Reviewed **Issue #01**
Players **1-2**
Graphics **05**/Sound **06**
Gameplay **04**/Life span **04**
Overall 05

MOTO GP
☐ Publisher: **SCEE**
☐ Developer: **Namco**
Touted as *Gran Turismo* on two wheels, *Moto GP* is a fantastic simulation of superbike racing. Features some of the best in-game replays to boot.
Reviewed **Issue #03**
Players **1-2**
Graphics **08**/Sound **07**
Gameplay **07**/Life span **06**
Overall 07

NHL 2001
☐ Publisher: **EA Sports**
☐ Developer: **EA Sports (Canada)**
EA Sports's perennial ice hockey licence has stepped up to the mark for its PS2 debut. Blissful graphics and infinitely tweakable gameplay.
Reviewed **Issue #02**
Players **1-2**
Graphics **09**/Sound **08**
Gameplay **08**/Life span **07**
Overall 08

ORPHEN
☐Publisher: **Activision**
☐Developer: **Shade Inc**
Disappointing anime inspired Japanese action RPG, short on both depth and adventure thrills.
Reviewed **Issue #01**
Players 1
Graphics **04**/Sound **03**
Gameplay **05**/Life span **03**
Overall 04

POOLMASTER
☐Publisher: **Take 2**
☐Developer: **Ask**
Despite tidy ball physics, *Poolmaster's* gameplay is dull and – based on US 8-Ball – will have minimal appeal for Brit hustlers.
Reviewed **Issue #02**
Players 1-2
Graphics **04**/Sound **06**
Gameplay **06**/Life span **04**
Overall 05

RAYMAN REVOLUTION
☐Publisher: **Ubi Soft**
☐Developer: **Ubi Soft**
Animation-quality graphics elevate this platformer above others of its kind.
Reviewed **Issue #02**
Players 1-4
Graphics **09**/Sound **07**
Gameplay **08**/Life span **08**
Overall 08

RC REVENGE PRO
☐Publisher: **Acclaim**
☐Developer: **Acclaim (Cheltenham)**
RC Revenge Pro gives us last-gen graphics, a sluggish frame rate and some less than taxing gameplay.
Reviewed **Issue #02**
Players 1-2
Graphics **02**/Sound **04**
Gameplay **03**/Life span **03**
Overall 03

READY 2 RUMBLE: ROUND 2
☐Publisher: **Midway**
☐Developer: **Midway**
Marvellous comedy boxing game, picking assorted, increasingly-ridiculous cartoon fighters against each other.
Reviewed **Issue #01**
Players 1-2
Graphics **07**/Sound **08**
Gameplay **07**/Life span **06**
Overall 07

RIDGE RACER V
☐Publisher: **SCEE**
☐Developer: **Namco**
You've got to respect it for the sense of speed, challenging handling and graphics, but jagged edges, limited size and a general lack of originality scupper this PS2 version.
Reviewed **Issue #01**
Players 1-2
Graphics **06**/Sound **07**
Gameplay **08**/Life span **07**
Overall 07

SILENT SCOPE
☐Publisher: **Konami**
☐Developer: **KCEO**
Slick but simple shooting gallery-style game, spiced up by police sniper dressing and some inventive film-based scenarios from *True Lies* to *The Last Boy Scout*.
Reviewed **Issue #01**
Players 1
Graphics **08**/Sound **06**
Gameplay **08**/Life span **07**
Overall 07

SILPHEED: THE LOST PLANET
☐Publisher: **Swing**
☐Developer: **Treasure/GameArts**
Tedious top-scrolling shoot-'em-up with shocking slow-down.
Reviewed **Issue #03**
Players 1
Graphics **04**/Sound **05**
Gameplay **03**/Life span **02**
Overall 04

SKY SURFER
☐Publisher: **Virgin Interactive**
☐Developer: **Idea Factory**
Jumping out of a plane on a surfboard attached to your legs might sound like fun but this game isn't.
Reviewed **Issue #04**
Players 1
Graphics **05**/Sound **04**
Gameplay **02**/Life span **02**
Overall 03

SMUGGLER'S RUN
☐Publisher: **Rockstar**
☐Developer: **Angel Studios**
A great game, with some impressively large free-roaming playing environments. Escape from the cops with a trunkload of booty.
Reviewed **Issue #01**
Players 1-2
Graphics **08**/Sound **08**
Gameplay **06**/Life span **07**
Overall 07

SPACE ACE
☐Publisher: **Digital Leisure**
☐Developer: **Cinematronics**
The successor to *Dragons Lair* has not aged very well. And like its relations has little to impress but the most retro thrill seeker.
Reviewed **Issue #04**
Players 1
Graphics **02**/Sound **02**
Gameplay **01**/Life span **01**
Overall 01

SSX **StarPlayer**
☐Publisher: **EA Sports Big**
☐Developer: **EA Sports (Canada)**
This outrageous, inventive, high-speed snowboard game is packed with crazy courses. It's fast, stylish, easy to pick up but hard to get great at.
Reviewed **Issue #01**
Players 1-2
Graphics **09**/Sound **08**
Gameplay **08**/Life span **08**
Overall 09

STREET FIGHTER EX3
☐Publisher: **Capcom Eurosoft**
☐Developer: **Arika**
Fans of this ageing fighting series could be disappointed with this first PS2 incarnation.
Reviewed **Issue #03**
Players 1-4
Graphics **06**/Sound **06**
Gameplay **07**/Life span **07**
Overall 07

SUMMONER
☐Publisher: **THQ**
☐Developer: **Volition**
Huge, sprawling RPG epic. An engaging and truly original plot which is let down only by some distinctly patchy graphics and draw distance.
Reviewed **Issue #04**
Players 1
Graphics **05**/Sound **09**
Gameplay **07**/Life span **09**
Overall 08

SUPER BUST-A-MOVE
☐Publisher: **Acclaim**
☐Developer: **Taito**
Another update of a classic game, but a pointless one. The cute manga-style graphics and addictive gameplay of yore are here but it's nothing new.
Reviewed **Issue #02**
Players 1-2
Graphics **07**/Sound **04**
Gameplay **05**/Life span **02**
Overall 05

SWING AWAY GOLF
☐Publisher: **EA**
☐Developer: **T&E Soft**
Average golf sim let down by poor presentation and slow loading times.
Reviewed **Issue #02**
Players 1-4
Graphics **03**/Sound **02**
Gameplay **05**/Life span **04**
Overall 03

TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT
☐Publisher: **SCEE**
☐Developer: **Namco**
Fantastically playable and graphically spectacular one- and two-player beat-'em-up. Nearly 40 fighters, plus the new tagging option, and a great *Tekken Bowl* sub-game.
Reviewed **Issue #01**
Players 1-2
Graphics **09**/Sound **08**
Gameplay **08**/Life span **07**
Overall 08

TG DARE DEVIL
☐Publisher: **Kemco**
☐Developer: **Papaya Studios**
Decent driving sim featuring Minis and Beetles racing round cities like Paris and London. Falls short of a great game because of tiresomely repetitive gameplay.
Reviewed **Issue #02**
Players 1-2
Graphics **05**/Sound **05**
Gameplay **05**/Life span **04**
Overall 05

THEME PARK WORLD
☐Publisher: **EA**
☐Developer: **Bullfrog**
Whether you like the thrill of the roller coaster, or the feeling of being in total control, you'll love this God sim. Fill kids up with fatty burgers and high sugar cola after charging their parents extortionate entry prices.
Reviewed **Issue #03**
Players 1
Graphics **07**/Sound **08**
Gameplay **08**/Life span **06**
Overall 07

TIMESPLITTERS **StarPlayer**
☐Publisher: **Eidos**
☐Developer: **Free Radical Design**
Fast and frantic first-person shooter. Multiplayer options, meaty weapons, loads of graphical variety and atmosphere, and a barking mad time travel/zombie/aliens story line.
Reviewed **Issue #01**
Players 1-4
Graphics **09**/Sound **09**
Gameplay **08**/Life span **09**
Overall 09

UNREAL TOURNAMENT
☐Publisher: **Infogrames**
☐Developer: **Epic Games**
The only PS2 game to currently offer a challenge to *TimeSplitters*. Gory, over-the-top immensely playable first-person shooter. Suffers from some frame rate problems.
Reviewed **Issue #04**
Players 1-4
Graphics **06**/Sound **09**
Gameplay **08**/Life span **07**
Overall 08

WILD WILD RACING
☐Publisher: **Rage**
☐Developer: **Rage**
Off-road buggy racing game with merely acceptable looks, and initially discouraging handling. Stick with it though, and it gets much more satisfying and strangely addictive.
Reviewed **Issue #01**
Players 1-2
Graphics **06**/Sound **05**
Gameplay **06**/Life span **07**
Overall 06

X-SQUAD
☐Publisher: **EA**
☐Developer: **EA/Square**
First-person stealth/shooter featuring a distinct lack of attention to detail. You play one part of a futuristic A-Team on a mission to save the world. Enjoyable enough but never inspiring.
Reviewed **Issue #02**
Players 1
Graphics **05**/Sound **06**
Gameplay **05**/Life span **06**
Overall 05

Echidna tops the Ladder this month despite her lack of experience in the lippy department.

Ladder Of Lust

Okay, then – a promise. You stop writing in with these and we'll put something else in its place. Maybe a nice column or something.

1. ECHIDNA
(THE BOUNCER)
Despite the kawai tan and ankle-worrying Buffalos, old Bisto face is a regular at every dive in New Tokyo.
PS2 appearances: Coming to PS2 in late March.

2. ELISE
(SSX)
Possibly something to do that headlight-friendly ski suit, wethinks. Still, rather her than Moby bloke.
PS2 appearances: SSX is on sale now.

3. SELENE STRIKE
(READY 2 RUMBLE: ROUND 2)
Looks a bit like that Cox woman off of *Friends* (but younger and without the Bruce Springsteen incident).
PS2 appearances: R2R: R2 is on sale now.

4. NATSUMA ARISAKI
(SWING AWAY GOLF)
You say saucy Japanese lady with krrrrazy hair. We say that 'ironic' Lu Cont nonce from Les Rhythmes Digitale.
PS2 appearances: Swing Away Golf is on sale now.

5. RAVELLE VELVET
(TIMESPLITTERS)
Purple bootles, nice shimmy, looks like Lady Miss Kier from Deee-Lite, handy with a Sci-Fi Auto Rifle…
PS2 appearances: TimeSplitters is on sale now.

6. LARA CROFT
(TOMB RAIDER: NEXT GENERATION)
Is Angelina the new Lara? Is Lara dead? Does Lara have the same 'intimate' tattoo as Angelina? Did it hurt? Etc?
PS2 appearances: Coming to the PS2 in winter 2001.

7. CHUN-LI
(STREET FIGHTER EX3)
Ryu only knows what a nice lady like Chun-Li's doing in a game like *EX3*, but it probably keeps Mr Blanka happy.
PS2 appearances: SFEX3 is on sale now.

8. KONOKO
(ONI)
Ah, this'll be where we tell you to head back to page 70 for our real life Kinoko feature.
PS2 appearances: Ah, this'll be where we tell you to…

9. MAMMA TUA
(READY 2 RUMBLE: ROUND 2)
Ladies Love was right – Mamma said knock you out! She may not be a lady, but she's all woman…
PS2 appearances: R2R: R2 is on sale now.

10. JUN KAZAMA
(TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT)
With her Berger-esque alice band and Satanic background, Jun is a step into lady darkness. SUFFER!
PS2 appearances: TTT is on sale now.

Bubbling under: Cammy (*Street Fighter*), Kasumi (*Dead Or Alive 2*), Sun Shang Sian (*Dynasty Warriors 2*), Julie (*Swing Away Golf*), Ai Fukami (*Ridge Racer V*), Rochelle Rincon (*Surfing H30*).

NOMINATE A CHARACTER FOR LADDER OF LUST!
Send your suggestions for the ladies, lads and, hell, elements who in your opinion deserve to rise up the ladder, to: **Ladder Of Lust, Official PlayStation 2 Magazine, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW** or email us at **PS2@futurenet.co.uk**

#05 Ready 2 Rumble: Round 2

Matt Sewell scares little children with his interpretation of the bizarre, final round of *Ready 2 Rumble: Round 2.*

WHAT?
So, what's going on here then?
Having dragged yourself out of the slums, bought a scratched copy of Survivor's *Eye Of The Tiger* and played it deep into the early hours whilst poncing about to a Jane Fonda work-out in a pair of pink spandex pants (possibly) you finally make it to the big time. Punching and shimmying your way through endless streams of 'have-a-go' contendahs you stand with bodies piled high around you and meet your final challenge. A bloody great snowman.

HOW?
So how exactly do you get to go ten rounds with Mr Frosty and that satanic sneer of his? And how does he punch with stick arms?

To come face-to-face with Frosty you must have taken your fighter through Arcade mode from beginning to end. This means completing the game several times to unlock all their secret costumes, a task that may take a more than considerable amount of time. Alternatively (or if you're a cheat) you can enter the PS2's system configuration and change the date to '25 December'. This will automatically turn Rumble Man (a character you still have to unlock by completing the game) into Frosty.

WHY?
This month, OPS2's Adonis-like Games Ed, Ben Lawrence decided to return to his old favourite for the ever popular 'one last go'.

"Every time I picked up *Ready 2 Rumble: Round 2* it seemed to just keep throwing surprises at me. There was something new to be discovered every time you entered the ring. First Michael Jackson popped up looking like a sun-dried twig, next it was a US presidential couple slogging it out in their PJs. I just had a funny feeling that if I plugged away at it for a little longer I'd discover something even stranger. Lo and behold a snowman appeared. I didn't just find a cheat on the Web. Oh no."

WHO?
This month's GameOver illustrator is Matt Sewell whose favourite game of the moment on PS2 is SSX.

"Even though I haven't played *Ready 2 Rumble: Round 2* I could tell from the screenshot I was given that the snowman looked a right evil sod and that's what I tried to convey in my image. A big, scary end of level boss.

"My favourite game on the PS2 so far is *SSX*. The movement and tricks are amazing, and in two-player mode it gets really intense. On PSone I still enjoy *GTA* plus *Metal Gear Solid* for the gadgets and that mad invisible ninja character."

YOUR GO!
If you think you've reached a better end sequence, write to us and tell us what it is, how you got there and why you think it's so great. Prizes on offer for the ones that we feature on this page include a framed print of the final artwork. Write to us at: **GameOver, Official PlayStation 2 Magazine**, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. Email PS2@futurenet.co.uk.